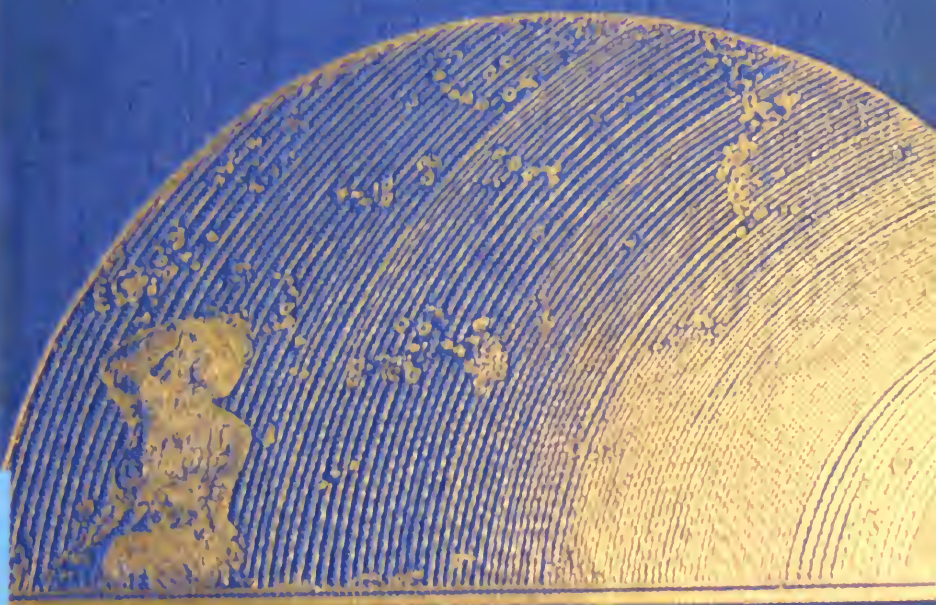
G·F·WATT



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REMINISCENCES OF
G. F. WATTS

"To this life things of sense
Make their pretence ;
In th' other angels have a right by birth ;
Man ties them both, alone,
And makes them one ;
With th' one hand touching heav'n ; with th' other, earth.

"In soul, he mounts and flies ;
In flesh he dies.
He wears a stuff, whose thread is coarse and round,
But trimm'd with curious lace ;
And should take place
After the trimming, not the stuff and ground."

—"*Man's Medley,*" George Herbert.

G. F. WATTS

From Painting by Cecil Schott, 1887

G. F. WATTS

REMINISCENCES

BY MRS. RUSSELL BARRINGTON
AUTHOR OF "THE REALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE,"
"LENA'S PICTURE," "HELEN'S ORDEAL,"
"A RETROSPECT," ETC.

"What is, is,—and one should not desire to make it seem to be other"
G. F. WATTS

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD
1905

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Reprinted November 1905

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
At the Ballantyne Press

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INSCRIBED

WITH GRATEFUL AFFECTION

TO THE MEMORY

OF

JANIE SENIOR

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PREFACE

In attempting to record these reminiscences of our great artist at so early a date after his death it is obviously impossible even to allude to many things connected with his memory. Characteristic and interesting though they be, this is also no moment to publish the numerous letters he wrote and which I have preserved. They were written after Watts' powers, artistic and intellectual, had reached their maturity, and forming as they do an analysis of his character and nature, a record of his life of thought and work as also of his general views on art, they might at some future date prove of value in helping to elucidate the nature, not only of the artist, but of the man. It was about the time when this correspondence began, and during the subsequent twelve years of his life, that Watts painted the works into which he consciously put most of himself—his aims and his ideas—and these will probably be those pictures by which his fame will be sustained and most lastingly secured, though there are some canvasses, which evince, I think, more distinctly his instinctive individual genius.

Put into the form more or less of letters, this correspondence might be considered in the light of a series of short essays. Watts found ordinary letter-writing most irksome, but when he discovered that he possessed a facility for jotting down his thoughts and ideas with his pen

he appears to have taken great interest in so doing. At one time he was in the habit of scribbling down a thought that might strike him at the moment on any scrap of paper that might be at hand, on every kind of subject. As these generally referred to conversations he had had with my husband and myself, he would often give these jottings to me by way of continuing the argument. I find I have fortunately preserved many of these jottings with his letters. On every scrap of paper is an idea, valuable as a criticism on art, morals, or manners. The first letter I possess is dated April 7, 1876—the last, April 2, 1904. Besides the more important letters, there are many notes which are only personally interesting as recalling little daily events that were characteristic of the life Watts was leading at the time they were written. In re-reading these letters the thought came—will there ever be an exhaustive Life written of the man who penned them? There is ever the same difficulty as regards biographies. When interest is keenest, it is then precisely the moment when it is hardly wise or seemly to challenge criticism by endeavouring to write a complete estimate of a notable individuality. When, in the future, certain difficulties no longer exist, even greater arise. Those who could have given a true and subtle atmosphere and vividness to the picture, editing the letters with a full knowledge of the circumstances and feelings which incited the writing of them—these will also have passed behind the veil. And not only does time rob the world of the right biographer, but also of the interested reader. No time seems exactly the best moment when a full biography should be written. Unless the history of great public events or discussions, having a literary or political value and interest, are connected with the personal life of an individual, there remains no vivid desire to know the *vraie*

vérité, which a true record could give, of the character and motives of the dead, when the generation who was influenced by the power and charm of the personality has also passed away. It is only natural this should be so. Besides the fact that the stream of life quickly passes on to other pastures in which the vitality of the present absorbs the energies of those who stamp their own age with most vitality, a completely truthful portrait, we all know, cannot be written solely through facts being transmitted second-hand. The side lights, the unacknowledged, sometimes even unconscious influences, the delicate shading and correct inferences which all help to make the picture a true, just, and merciful record of the life of a notable human being—a record which adds to the world's treasures by adding to men's knowledge of men—can only be supplied by one who was in the life when it was being lived. Facts that every man in the street thinks he knows, falsify, as often as they elucidate, the estimate of a character. "The lie which is half a truth is ever the worst of lies," and facts, from which perverted deductions are invented, can lead to conceptions which are completely false.

Many think that the canvasses of great painters are their best biographies. In the case of Watts, though his art is extraordinarily consistent as regards certain qualities and intentions, his pictures are extraordinarily unequal as regards others. Moreover, as one who, besides his universally acknowledged greatness as an artist is viewed by one section of the public as a thinker and a moralist, Watts' position in the interest of his generation differs distinctly from that of most painters. That many of the qualities in his Celtic nature and genius could inspire a very special affection and interest, many friends can testify. An attempt to write an impartial criticism of one who was possessed of such an

unusual power of sympathy and of so much personal charm would at any time be difficult; at this moment it would seem impossible. My object in writing the following pages is to record accurately those things which have reference to my husband's and my own personal friendship with Watts during many years of his life—to give to the future a page of contemporary history, which, though by no means exhaustive, is correct.

E. I. B.

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REMINISCENCES OF G. F. WATTS

CHAPTER I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A LONG time ago—so long ago it seems almost to belong to a previous existence—I was sitting one afternoon in Rossetti's studio watching him painting on the "Lady Lilith." My first master, not counting the schoolroom drawing master, was Ruskin, who was very kind to me. He had advised me, if I could get the chance of studying with Mr. Arthur Hughes, to do so. This delightful artist, belonging to the pre-Raphaelite school, consented to take me as a pupil. As part of my art education Arthur Hughes took me from time to time to Rossetti's studio, where I met the mother of the four distinguished sons and daughters, also the great Christina herself. On this particular afternoon the picture just completed, "The Beloved," was placed on an easel in the middle of the studio for a few friends to view. As I watched Rossetti painting on the "Lady Lilith" and listened as he talked to me about art, I thought I had never before heard any voice of the same curiously beautiful deep-toned quality. Strong and grave was the intonation, and though restrained and gentle, vibrating with temperament.

Though no trace of a foreign accent could be discerned, probably it was his Italian origin which gave to the sound the particular ring it had. Rossetti's eyes and this voice and a long brown Noah's-Ark-like coat are what I remember as his most striking characteristics. The voice alone would have given distinction to the atmosphere in his studio. This seemed to me an enchanted chamber—the curious quaint beauty of the furniture and ornaments, the pictures in it which, like the voice of the painter, rang out a tune unlike all others; the garden, seen through a large window opening nearly down to the ground, a garden that might have been a hundred miles from London—indeed it felt to me still farther—away out of the world in a fairy-land, with queer animals disporting themselves therein, all seemed to centre harmoniously round the strong personality of the being who reigned there. Steeped with the glamour of the place, I sat very happily watching his brush and listening to his vibrating deep voice.

The door opened, and a party, consisting of one man and a few large ladies, came in to see the newly-finished picture. I remember the ladies were large because the man looked small in their midst, otherwise I have no recollection of their appearance. The one figure absorbed all my attention. Habited in a long sealskin coat it was small but in no wise insignificant—on the contrary, it was distinguished in appearance. The face was handsome, with a serious countenance suggesting a latent weariness and melancholy hidden under a crust of reserve. His words were few, but he gazed intently at the new picture. From something Rossetti had said when the party entered the room I had realised that this quiet self-contained personality belonged to Watts—Watts the painter and friend of my friend Mrs. Nassau Senior of the rippling golden hair; of Miss Senior,

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

By Cecil Schott

surrounded in her portrait by the beautiful sky and the grand laurel leaves, put in as the great Venetians would have painted them; of Miss Eden, with the long throat and rosy fair English colouring; the painter of yet another portrait which had bewitched me even more than all these, "A lady singing." I had met and greatly admired the original of the painting, Miss Russell, the sister of my father's private secretary, but when I saw her portrait on the walls of the Royal Academy I had quite lost my heart to it. It was not an important work, but it was so very much Watts, unlike any painting of other schools or individuals. It rendered that particular atmosphere and distinction of a modern English *lady* in a fervent yet restrained language of art. There was atmosphere and loose texture in the quality of the painting, noble truth in the drawing, and the special charm of spontaneity in the brush work. A silvery grey dress with one pink rose fastened to it echoing the fair pink on the cheek, made the colouring of the picture—a slight work of a great master—containing, however, the power of stamping itself on the memory as a thing of beauty, a very true test of greatness in a work of art. And yet another gem I remembered which helped to pile up the interest with which the figure in the sealskin coat inspired me. I had only then seen it once, on the walls of the Academy—the painting on panel called "Choosing," another of those pictures which once seen is never forgotten. A beautiful fair girl's head and a perfect throat stretching forward towards a branch of camellias; a hand slid caressingly under one of the deep pink flowers, the smooth enamel leaves painted as no one but Watts could paint leaves. These pictures were the only work I had then seen painted by the figure standing looking at Rossetti's picture, but these were enough to single him out as one apart from ordinary mortals. I was

young, and art was my passion, so I felt greatly excited and interested in watching the perpetrator of these exquisite things. From the corner behind the canvas of the "Lady Lilith" I watched the party come and go.

Some years passed. Just before my marriage I had been seeing my friend Mrs. Nassau Senior frequently. She asked me whether I would not like to see Watts once in the old Little Holland House which was about to be pulled down. She gave me a note of introduction, and Mr. Barrington and I started one afternoon in June, 1868, to Melbury Road, then in the process of being made. The carriage had to drive over bricks and mortar and the roughest of ground to reach the old thatched porch of Little Holland House. The low building stood in melancholy isolation in the midst of this untidy confusion. Inside, except the work in the studios and the paintings by Watts on the walls, everything seemed to hang on its last thread. I suppose my mind was too full of other things at that moment, for I cannot even remember the pictures I saw that day, only that Watts was very kind and talked pleasantly, and would insist on seeing me to the porch, which I tried to prevent his doing by saying good-bye in the studio. Mr. Barrington had remained in the carriage, as he said he never knew what to say to artists about their own work. I did not know what excuse to make for his seeming indifference when Watts asked whether he would not come in.

We had been married five years when, after an illness I had had, we went at Easter to Freshwater. Our friend Mrs. Ritchie, then Miss Annie Thackeray, was staying there at that time.[1] Watts had built his house, The Briary,

[1] The memory of this visit to Freshwater still conjures up charming scenes. Osier-beds spread over with a bloom of juicy pink, and meadows decked with bright gold king cups where we sat on the bent trunk of a willow tree reading

MRS. NASSAU SENIOR

From Pencil Drawing by G. F. Watts

and again my dear friend Mrs. Nassau Senior gave us a letter to him. There was illness at The Briary, but Watts met us outside and often walked with us in the lanes and on the downs. I can recall his figure now as he sauntered with us along the country roads in the soft grey hat he always wore and a loose cape flying in the wind. He was a much less formidable looking person than the Watts in Rossetti's studio.

It was at Freshwater he gave me my first lesson. I was painting a pretty thatched cottage in one of the lanes when he opened the little garden gate and stood over my easel. I remember his saying I had painted the old chimney of the cottage as the Venetians would have painted it—cleanly and frankly with no smudged edges. Besides desiring always to see the best in everything, Watts had a natural gift for doing so. This gave a very flattering tone to his criticisms, and these have at times unfortunately raised hopes never to be realised. It was not insincerity which made Watts say nice things which were excessive about the work he was shown; it was a genuine wish to discover anything that might be good in it, combined with an absence of the critical faculty. The mistake he made was, I think, that, having a habit of mind which depreciated his own work, he did not realise the weight which every word he spoke had in the minds of students, who not unnaturally exaggerated the value of the performances he had praised. I do not remember

"The Newcomes"; a poetical ball at Farringford, where the music was soft and low, and where I first saw the beautiful face of the poet's wife; and I still see a clear picture of Tennyson waltzing round to the dreamy music with a pretty young American lady, evidently greatly enjoying the dance; a picnic on the downs above the Needles, when Tennyson took me to the spot where, lying down on the edge of the turf, looking over straight down on the shore, you see waves of wonderful colour, emeralds, sapphires, and amethysts, flowing up to the wall of the white chalk cliff.

being over-elated by Watts' kindness, for I had just got far enough to know that I could paint nothing as I wanted to paint it; and, being critical by nature, I had within myself my harshest fault-finder. But his sympathy with me in my small efforts certainly tended to make us friends. When we were leaving Freshwater, he asked us not to forget to come to see him in his studio in the new Little Holland House which he had built in Melbury Road. I had no difficulty in remembering to do so, for I felt he was already a friend. I took him the work I was doing, and we had long talks together, when he explained to me very exhaustively his views about his own art. He regretted often during these conversations not having any one to help him in achieving his aims, half suggesting that I might perhaps be able to do so. I did not take the matter up at the time, but after discussing it with Mr. Barrington, wrote and told Watts if I could in any way help him I should be proud to do so. In a letter dated April 7, 1876, L. H. H., Watts writes: "A thousand thanks for your offer. I don't know but what you might help me with some advantage to yourself, because any one who does help me must go profoundly into the matter, and if real study has any charms for you, why, perhaps, you might be willing to undergo some stiff and stern application; but, I can tell you, help to me in the works I have proposed to myself, and indeed have plunged into, would be no child's play. If you will come and see me any day between 2.30 and 5 we may talk over possibilities. Thornycroft the sculptor has commenced to build two semi-detached houses next door to me. He intends to live in one and let or sell the other. It strikes me this house might suit you." I went one day soon after receiving this letter to see him, and Mr. Barrington arranged to take the house that was being

MRS. NASSAU SENIOR
From the Painting by G. F. Watts

built to which Watts referred in his letter. I felt this was indeed a delightful opportunity of entering into the highest precincts of art under the most helpful auspices. I wrote these, to me, most interesting facts to my friend Mrs. Nassau Senior, who replied: "What a comfort it is to me that you will be near Watts, to urge him to his noblest work and to stave off too many distractions (or should I say attractions)!"

I have always viewed our friendship with Watts as a legacy from this beautiful friend, of a nature so large, so generous and tender-hearted—one whose name will ever be associated with those who have most befriended young girls of all classes. In the full-length portrait which Watts painted of her she is represented as watering and bending over her flowers with loving care. He told me he had tried to suggest in this picture her beneficent gracious nature.

A dark day came—March 24th—which robbed our world of her bright, loving presence, and also that of another equally precious to his friends—moreover, a very shining light to the world beyond, one with whom we had lived for years—my brother-in-law, Walter Bagehot.

It was under these sad auspices we entered the life that promised to be so full of interest and work.

CHAPTER II

AIMS

Watts had built his new house in Melbury Road, in one respect, on the same plan as that on which Leighton had built his house in Holland Park Road. To obviate any possibility of staying guests there was only one bedroom, besides those for servants.[1] Watts had gone even one step further than Leighton in his endeavours to secure an undisturbed working life. In the new Little Holland House there was but one sitting-room, the rest of the ground floor being occupied by three painting studios and one sculptor's studio. He had been forced to put up an iron house in his garden, in which to store his work and materials during the building of the new house, on account of his having to move out of the old one somewhat suddenly. Shortly before the time we became his neighbours, Watts had had to face life from a fresh point of view. Circumstances had occurred which made him more than ever desirous of consecrating the whole of his life to his work. The aims and ambitions which had from the first guided his art, had strengthened as his gifts ripened. He repeatedly told us that his sole desire was to give his entire life unremittingly and with single-hearted earnestness to his work; to endeavour by so doing to substantiate ideas which he conceived might and ought to be expressed in the language of art; to use his gifts in the cause

[1] In several letters, when writing on the subject, he made use of the expression "to avoid complications."

MRS. HUGHES

From the Painting by G. F. Watts

of raising art to the same level of culture in England as that on which great poetry and great music stand; in fact, to bring the same high faculties of the human mind and spirit to bear on creations in painting and sculpture that are the sources of the more purely intellectual and abstract expressions in writing and sound. No less from patriotic than from artistic aspirations did Watts long to see the art of England placed in the first rank among the serious concerns and interests of his country.

By most of his fellow-artists, as well as by the world in general, Watts, up to this time, had been viewed as a portrait-painter only, though occupying a separate and rather a higher position than most. I remember more than one artist speaking of him as such, and rather contesting his wisdom in attempting any other line of art. One of the greatest in the pre-Raphaelite school was of this opinion, and I remember his saying to me, referring to Watts' portraits, "He is no good at anything else." The pre-Raphaelites had portioned out various vocations to the several members of their body, a few only having reserved to themselves the privilege of painting pictures. The brotherhood would doubtless have accorded to Watts a place as their portrait-painter, but Watts was not a pre-Raphaelite, though he sympathised in a measure with the principles which instigated the feeling of the movement.[1] Moreover, he did not intend only to paint portraits. One of his intimate acquaintances informed us that Watts ought to paint portraits; he would never make money by anything else, and he ought to make money. It can easily be understood we felt no inclination to discuss the matter further with this individual,

[1] The influence of this school is to be traced in several of Watts' pictures, but most notably in the portrait of Mrs. Hughes, the mother of Mrs. Nassau Senior, and of the author of "Tom Brown's School Days." See illustration.

Watts being clearly the only judge of his own pecuniary necessities. The view he took as regarded his first duty in life was other than that of aiming at making money, so far as he explained it to us. Whether he made money or not was of little consequence to him, provided he had sufficient means to meet his own very modest requirements and the necessary expenses involved by his work. He had a great horror of extravagance; he had a great horror of ever falling into debt. He often said he would like to have money to give away in order to alleviate suffering, but he considered his first duty was to give to the world the best that was in him, and to present to the public the fruits of his gifts and of his labour. He had already, as is well known, offered to paint the history of the world in a large public building for the price only of the materials he used, and that offer had been refused; but, nothing daunted, he still aimed at working out such ideas and conceptions in art which would elevate the minds of his own countrymen, and by presenting them to his nation he hoped to carry out his views of patriotism. Watts had very decided ideas and feelings as to the duty of every man of every class effecting something for the good of his country, and all he asked was to be allowed to work and to make his art a factor in ennobling the thought and feeling of his generation. His letters, written when he was about sixty years of age, are full of sentences expressing this desire to benefit mankind through his art, and to live an unmolested working life. There were two things he wrote that his experience proved to be worth living for—one to do as much for humanity as possible, and the other to have friends. Much that the world held to be valuable seemed to be within his reach were he to study the taste of the age. He did not think it would be difficult to achieve a certain amount of celebrity, and

it would be still easier, he had proved to himself, to make a really large income. Little as these objects had appeared to him formerly, they seemed to become less and less valuable. A sense of great deserving would indeed be a treasure.

When recovering from the first real illness he had after we became neighbours, he was much fretted at the loss of working time it had caused. He wrote that it made him feel more than ever (if that was possible) how absolutely necessary it was for him to put aside every consideration excepting work. He did not find himself with any changed ideas, aspirations, or resolutions. He had discovered that these were absolutely all fixed, but he had felt he had stood at death's door—it had been ajar; when next he should find himself there it would be well open, and he must be ready to go in. This he felt to be with him certain knowledge. It made no change in his mind, his thoughts, or objects; but he felt he must put on more pace in order to satisfy the burning desire he had to do certain things. In the Middle Ages, when men felt as he did, not especially at that moment but for years past, they went into a monastery and gave themselves up to mortification and forms of discipline. He did not feel the slightest inclination to such excesses. In his opinion, though very sincere indications of seeking after the right, they were childish and even selfish; but he did wish to set aside all worldly and ordinary objects, living for the best he knew of, as if he only saw the outside world, and the outside world only saw him through a grille.

On one summer evening we were standing on the lawn close to his sculptor's studio, after he had finished his day's work. He had been labouring on the large sketch of the equestrian statue which the Duke of Westminster had asked Watts to execute for him representing the Duke's ancestor, Hugh Lupus. At that time Watts, having made the small

original sketch, which afterwards he worked out in heroic size, naming it "Physical Energy,"[1] wished to work out the statue for the Duke of Westminster from this small and very fine sketch. On that evening he was explaining to me that he was aiming at expressing something more than the mere portrait of the first ancestor of the Grosvenors—the *gros-veneur* who had come over from France and had been given tracts of marshy land in Wales. The idea of carrying out the work merely as a portrait of the Duke's ancestor did not interest Watts so much as embodying into the commission he had undertaken the idea of "the human will bridling in brute force," which had inspired the small sketch.[2] He told me that it did not interest him to do work which merely appealed to the eye, and did not suggest ideas to the mind. He ended by exclaiming with some excitement, "I am nothing. Oh! you will find out I am nothing! I have no genius—no facility: any one could do better work if they sacrificed everything to it as I do! One thing alone I possess, and I never remember the time I was without it—an aim towards the highest, the best, and a burning desire to reach it. If I were asked to choose whether I would like to do something good, as the world judges popular art, and receive personally great credit for it, or, as an alternative, to produce something which should rank with the very best, taking a place with the art of Pheidias or Titian, with the highest poetry and the most elevating music, and remain unknown as the perpetrator of the work, I should choose the latter." At this lapse of time these words may perhaps not be exactly those Watts used, but I

[1] Eventually the statue was called "*Vital* Energy."

[2] The Duke of Westminster, however, preferred the more distinct idea of a portrait of Hugh Lupus, so the equestrian statue now at Eaton Hall was finished, and Watts then began on an enlargement of his small sketch, the cast of which is to be placed near Cecil Rhodes' grave.

remember this scene so vividly, and what he said, that they are to all intents and purposes the same.[1] Whatever else I did or did not find in Watts during those many years of friendship, unwavering consistency in aiming at the highest, unvarying industry in endeavouring to reach it, I did find was the keynote of his art.

Sitting over his fire one winter evening in those early days, arranging with his fingers, as was his wont, the folds of his long grey coat in good lines as if he were modelling, when he had as usual been depreciating his own powers, he said, I remember, that he was like a coarse piece of stuff through which was run one golden thread. He longed for that golden thread to guide his whole life, but he felt nothing but that he was such a very poor creature. I forget whether he referred to George Herbert's lines, but as George Herbert was very much to me, I have always associated this conversation with the lines in the "Man's Medley." The absolute consistency with which Watts ever followed his high aims in art is the more admirable on account of the very small amount of physical vitality he possessed, which was in part the cause of his excessive distrust of self. The almost morbid feeling of shame which so often came over him, he told me went so far at times as to stretch over those that belonged to him. In 1886 I remember his saying, "It is a strange thing, but as soon as anything belongs to me I feel inclined to think little of it."

In 1885 public events, about which he generally took a

[1] In a letter he wrote, dated April 2, 1904, more than a quarter of a century later, he writes of his distaste, "almost pain," of finding himself for ever being brought before the public notice. He never wished nor worked for it, and, if circumstances had permitted, would have done his work as Pictor Ignotus, leaving it to say what it might when he should have done with it. He adds he is full of maladies, some big enough to be serious, and others serious enough to be great inconveniences, but he is able to work, and as eager to improve as ever, and that's about all. He was then eighty-seven!

pessimistic view, were not very cheering. He writes he was always a pessimist, but he thinks every one must be feeling pretty low just then. This made him feel so much more anxious to be worth a little more. He feels so wretchedly small—a survival of the unfittest. "I hear," he adds, "around me the tramp of armed men, and the hurry of others hastening to claim the right to live, and feel, I can't tell you what a desire to be among them somehow. If I had the singer's gift I would lend them some aid, but, as it is, I almost feel too small to live, and very often life is a positive pain to me for want of mental lungs powerful enough to breathe the strong air. What a nuisance it is to be less than oneself!" From a child he had ever had this feeling of distress with respect to his achievements being so far behind his aims and desires. He told me that when he was only fifteen years old he remembered feeling overwhelmed with shame at not having already achieved something.[1] Watts, however, never allowed this self-depreciation to mar his energy nor check his ardent desire to improve. He was ever true to that golden thread which he recognised as running through his nature despite the distrust and self-despisings. Every thought, habit, or study that might induce this golden thread to assert its influence on his art he would encourage. He wrote in very early days of our friendship, that he thought the habit of thinking upon a great theme must induce a habit of thinking nobly. He, though verbally dumb, felt the necessity of uttering his thoughts, which were

[1] As quite a little boy he had drawn horses with chalk or anything that would mark on walls or gateways. The first real gratification he received from sympathy and appreciation was while he was studying at the Royal Academy schools. He told me that one day when the master came to his drawing-board he looked at what Watts had done, and, holding it up in view of the whole class, said, "Now, that is how I like to see a drawing done." He referred to the clean precision of the line.

not always grovelling. But artists speak a dead language in which power of expression is difficult to acquire, and even if they master something of that, the loftiest range of thought is denied them, as nobody cares for what they might be able to do, and consequently their efforts find no purchasers, and everyday needs oblige them to give their lives to the production of such wares as may find favour. "Happier the poet!"

In 1885 Watts wrote that he was most strongly impressed with the reality of Miss Alexander's work. It seemed to him to be far the most real thing he knew, so sincere and true to the producer's feeling that every defect is compensated for, and Watts put the result, therefore, where Ruskin did. He was trying then at Brighton to do absolutely simple work, setting aside grounds and methods, and every consideration but simple aim. He felt a certain sense of emancipation, but the things he considered mere trifles. He continues: "I wonder whether the heroic strain which has filled the air, and which gives me the same sort of sensation that the 'Dead March in Saul' does, will breed anything heroic in art! I don't know whether the heroic sentiment has ever really reproduced itself in art. Perhaps the Parthenon especially was the outcome of that sentiment, nothing later. The religious sentiment from Giotto to Michael Angelo certainly inspired the Tuscan and Roman schools. Splendid commercial and warlike successes did impress a splendid character on the Venetian Art, but neither of these answered to the heroic sentiment, different from religious devotion, but highly devotional; not depending upon the success of enterprise, nor by any means attending success, but worthy to succeed because generous and self-sacrificing. This has certainly inspired much poetry but very little *art*, perhaps because of technical difficulties, the means of expression requiring recurrence to a lower range

of conditions, the copying of ordinary forms and effects. If artists could acquire knowledge enough to be independent of the outward ordinary, able to depend upon memory and draw upon imagination without losing truth (who will not suffer herself to be ignored!) and without repetition, the thought might have full swing." Watts made a line of study for himself on these principles, which he discussed constantly with me. Painting portraits, he would say, had been of the greatest service to him. It had given him an experience of form, and had shown him possibilities in colouring, and had, moreover, obviated his falling into any mannerism as regarded form. His own strong preferences being for the Pheidian character of structure, he might have missed much of interest, which he learnt to sympathise with and admire in other classes of form, had he not had the apprenticeship of portrait-painting to teach him to look out for individuality as well as for beauty. The apprenticeship cost him much. It was to him often something very like torture having to paint portraits.[1] I traced the extraordinary interest I found existing in Watts' work to the combination in his painting of this knowledge, acquired by constant industry and study, with the due encouragement he gave his instinctive sense for form and colour. He never allowed an effect either in nature or art to pass him by without consolidating it in his store of knowledge through the process of reasoning out its cause. He turned his mind on to his instincts. The gift for design was quite instinctive in Watts' genius. I do not think it was in his power to make an ignoble composition. This I had realised when I first saw his work; but on closer intimacy with it, as I watched the pictures day by day, and

[1] He said the moment when relatives and friends came to inspect the portrait was *quite* torture. "You stand first on one foot, then on the other, with nothing to say—waiting for the verdict. When it comes it is generally the one thing that is least bad in the painting which is most criticised."

MRS. HUGH SMITH

From the Painting by G. F. Watts

as the designs developed through the fitting in and adding of detail, I realised more and more that they were worked out through a principle as well as by his instinctive genius. Watts would say that the best things always come by accident, but that an artist should remember that a principle lies at the root of the success of the accident; and once that principle was worked out and secured in the mind, the artist could possess his accident and repeat it, in this wise amassing a store of experience from the most spontaneous impressions and from the most unpremeditated touches. If I were asked to put into few words in what lay the secret of Watts' success as an artist (given his natural gifts), I should say it was a genius for making the most of every opportunity.[1] He learnt from everything and every one he met. His mind was eminently earnest and humble, always in an open attitude to receive impressions, acquire knowledge, and to rectify error in himself.

Watts would often criticise the methods of teaching in the art schools of that day, saying that the students were set to learn precisely what could not be taught in a school, and the grammar of principles in which they could be instructed was never touched upon. A living model was placed before them, and students were given hours—indeed days—to make copies of the model. Though this might more or less train the eye, as any work from nature does, it did not, without further teaching, instil any knowledge to the mind, nor fix any facts in the memory which could later help a student to carry out his own ideas and conceptions. It did not teach

[1] In those days Watts would frequently in the afternoons visit the Aquarium at Westminster. It taught him much in his study of the human form to watch the acrobatic performances which took place there. He took an interest in Zazelle, the girl who was shot from the cannon, and painted a striking head of her. He greatly admired her courage and the calm composure with which she met the danger to life, which she told him every performance of this feat entailed.

him the relative proportions of the bones, nor the form muscles took in different actions of the body, nor the action the body takes under the influence of various feelings and emotions. He was of opinion that a model should be used in a school in order that the master should exemplify these facts on the living form—demonstrating them as the model took various positions, the students meanwhile making notes or very slight sketches. Real finish in execution could better be acquired by studying from "still life." Once the hand is able to transcribe the impressions taken in by the eye through conscientious copying of any object before it, and the mind has acquired a knowledge of the human form and countenance, and of the various actions and expressions possible to them, also the influence these have on attitude and features, then the student is able to draw the figure intelligently, and amass for himself data which will serve him in original composition. Watts thought it distinctly deteriorating to a student to be made to copy the same model in the same attitude for hours together. It encouraged a mechanical and mindless habit of occupation, the thoughts being induced to wander away from the work in hand. No fresh impressions were taken in, and no fresh ideas were suggested, so the student naturally thought of other things less dull. With Watts, study—and he remained an earnest student to the end—meant putting his whole self into his work, moreover acquiring as much knowledge and exercising as much memory as would enrich that self which his genius forced into the service of art.

He had been brought up as a child, he told me, in an atmosphere strictly evangelical and Sabbatarian. The Sundays, he said, were very dull days. Still the effect of this early religious training, as on Ruskin, was stamped deeply into his nature. When his gifts as an artist gradually

developed and he realised the deep joy he felt in beauty,[1] and the intense interest and excitement which the endeavour to express it aroused in him, his scrupulous conscience, backed by the early strict religious training, was inspired with a sense that it was his duty to give back some gift to the world in return, it might almost be said in his case, in expiation for the sensuous enjoyment that he as a born artist experienced in working at his art. Notwithstanding the labour it cost him, nothing in life could compare in joy to the delight of revelling in beauty. Those alone who have known the passionate love, the engrossing entrancement which art can inspire, the intense interest a born artist feels in his work—even in the actual manipulation of the brush, can gauge truly the amount of merit to be allotted to one who sacrifices much that the world esteems as most enviable to the uninterrupted pursuance of it. To work is a necessity; it is a craving in the nature which demands to be satisfied, or life becomes disjointed—a failure—unlived! "Va! your human talk and doings are a tame jest; the only passionate life is in form and colour."[2] No one ever realised this state of feeling more than did Watts; but, with a more intellectual faculty than is bestowed on many artists, he also realised that the pursuit which his nature enforced as a peremptory necessity, ought to influence others beneficially, and to take a place among the levers for good in modern civilisation, as it did in the Greek and early Italian civilisations. He did not seek to teach through an obviously didactic treatment of a subject. Art, he felt, could teach her highest lesson by being herself treated nobly. A subject

[1] He would tell me that often at the sight of an exquisite scene in nature, or even of some passage of colour in a blue distance (blue was the colour which gave him most delight), or the pathetic loveliness in a baby, or any very young thing, his eyes would fill with tears from the emotion he felt.

[2] Cosimo. "Romola," George Eliot.

should tend to elevate by speaking the noble language of Nature in her most impressive moods, the meanwhile associating such moods with ideas which spring from high instincts in human nature.

As regarded his general education, Watts was self-taught —but how well taught! He was possessed naturally of a subtle, finely-pointed, distinguishing mind, as well as of rare artistic instincts. Industry never was more wisely guided. He gave me (I have them still) the sheets of paper on which he wrote his German exercises after he had grown up and was working hard at his art, to show me what pains he had taken in learning the German letters. The change in his English handwriting which took place between the time when he was twenty and sixty tells volumes. He gave me the following copy of the letter he wrote when presenting the picture of "The Good Samaritan" to Manchester, a testimony of admiration to Thomas Wright.

"The picture I have painted as a testimony of respect and admiration for the truly heroic conduct of Thomas Wright, I wish to present to his friends and admirers, a range that will doubtless comprise the whole town of Manchester. The work in itself may be of trifling merit, but it comes from one who would give more, but that his hand lacks means, and, as a testimony of sympathy and respect from a stranger, may perhaps be gratifying to Thomas Wright and his friends. But that I am like Rosalind, out of suit with fortune, I would complete my work by putting it into a suitable frame."

It would be difficult to trace any resemblance in the handwriting of this letter to that of the letters addressed to me from the year 1876. Even the short scrawls in pencil on scraps of paper hastily torn off from the nearest piece at hand that he sent in constantly, asking me some

GROUP OF HEADS
From Miniature by G. F. Watts

question, or whether I could come in to look at something at once, were in the handwriting of a very cultured person. Still greater is the difference shown by a letter which he had begun but not finished, pasted on the back of the ivory of the miniatures he gave me. No greater proof could be found of what self-teaching can do than can be traced in Watts' life, nor of the immense value of a central aim towards which all secondary interests should pay obeisance. He distinguished in very early days the worth of that "golden thread" which inspired him with aims towards the highest in art. He used his intellect, his artistic gifts, all in the service of that "golden thread" which gave him an insight into the best, the noblest, the most unselfish feelings: into the refinement of the highest sensibilities, and into the charm of the most polished manners, no less than into the secrets of the beauty and nobility of great art.

CHAPTER III

GENIUS

It is comparatively easy to write of those aims to which Watts consciously aspired, for I have but to re-read his letters and I find them amply described. It is another matter to write of his genius. Instead of interpreting it in any fashion in words or writing, he denied its existence "I have not a scrap of genius," he would say and write. "You have genius —I have none," an announcement which, as may be easily conceived, I received with amused, though perhaps patient, incredulity. The wealth of genius which Watts possessed was so innate, so part of himself, that he was, I think, unconscious of the existence of his riches. Feeling himself unlike others in many respects, feeling also a want of the kind of everyday facility which many inferior artists possess, and having a distrustful, self-depreciating attitude of mind regarding all he was and all he did, he viewed the dissimilarity between himself and others as proving his own inferiority. His taste and aspirations also leading him to dwell on the very best things that have been produced in the world's history of art and literature, any comparison with these and his own work depressed him greatly, and led to belittlements of self. Moreover, as is often the case with those gifted with rare instincts and imagination which are outside and beyond the conscious working of their minds, Watts had a certain curiosity about himself. In

conversing he would often try to unravel the inconsistencies in his nature—"the dualities in my nature," as he described them in letters—and he would, I think, speak of the consciousness of his deficiencies in order to challenge a discussion of them.

Watts was a Celt—his genius was Celtic, his instinctive, unconscious genius;—but with his conscious brain and eye he worshipped Pheidias. Ruskin once said Watts was a great artist ruined by studying the Greeks. Watts, however, studied the Greeks not merely from the outside, not only because Greek Art holds the highest place among the world's art treasures, but because through his Celtic blood also ran a vein in sympathy with the beauty in nature we find accentuated in the work of the Pheidian school. Among the first lessons Watts gave me were those on the specially noble character of form in the Theseus, of which he had a cast, and in the large outline drawings on brown paper he had made from a famous model,[1] of which he gave me photographs. These are grand drawings, inspired by great enthusiasm for the beauty of the original. He maintained that the form in this model was even finer than that in the work of Pheidias, having "more length of limb," a proportion in human structure which Watts admired enormously. Though he recognised Ruskin's fine sense of beauty in nature, he was constantly drawing my attention to the fact that the beauty in the structure of the human form was a dead letter to Ruskin.[2] Watts gave me a packet of letters he had received from Ruskin before the time when his allegiance was absorbed by the pre-Raphaelites. In these letters

[1] The figure which had inspired his grand "Daphne" and other works.

[2] I remember Ruskin saying facetiously while he was giving me a lesson: "I not only can't draw anything moving, but anything that *can* move, for it fusses me to think that it may begin to do it!" He was forgetting how beautifully he could draw clouds.

he tries to induce Watts to study botany instead of Pheidias.[1] The letters at this time express great interest and unbiassed admiration of his pictures. In one very characteristic note Ruskin writes: "I was thinking, after I left you yesterday, that you were mistaken in the botany of one of your pictures. Forget-me-nots do not grow on graves: *anywhere* but on a grave. Neither do they grow among thorns, but by sweet, quiet streams, and in fair pastures (Psalm xxiii. 2–3).—Ever affectionately yours, J. RUSKIN." In another, "Study botany with all your might and main.[1] A letter written in pencil on a rough piece of paper is very characteristic. "DEAR WATTS,—Can you dine with us on Wednesday at six—day after to-morrow, at *Denmark Hill?* I haven't been able to come to see you before. I don't understand the new picture, but it is glorious, and Satan has his cheek-bone all right.—Ever yours, J. RUSKIN." The picture referred to was entitled, "Satan walketh to and fro on the Earth seeking whom he may devour." Watts told me later Ruskin avowed to him that he had ceased to feel that these pictures appealed to him. Watts could not at that time acquire an enthusiasm for botany; flowers, he would tell me, had not the same attraction for him as had leaves and foliage. Their form, as a rule, seemed too self-contained and small in character to inspire him with desire to paint them.

As he described his early life to me, it is evident that from the first his modesty prevented his acknowledging, even to himself, that he had any special gifts. This diffidence, combined with his great power of enthusiasm for other than

[1] They are addressed to the studio Watts first occupied after his return from Italy (30 Charles Street, Berkeley Square), which became later the Cosmopolitan Club. On the walls of this studio he painted scenes from Boccaccio's "Decameron," about which Lord Houghton made his *bon mot:* "You have heard of Watts' *Hymns,* now come and see Watts' *Hers!*"

MISS MARY KIRKPATRICK BRUNTON

From the Painting by G. F. Watts

his own work, retarded, perhaps, the full development of his individuality as an artist till his return from Italy in 1847, when he was thirty years of age. Before leaving England, in 1843, his paintings were strangely unlike his matured work.[1] He recounted to me the story of the first commission he received for a portrait. A friend had recommended him to Mr. Ionides as a young artist who would be able to copy well a portrait of which Mr. Ionides desired a replica, and he was given the commission. When it was finished and taken to the owner, the copy was considered so far superior to the original that Mr. Ionides forthwith gave Watts a commission to paint the portraits of several members of his family.[2] The portrait of Miss Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton,[3] in my possession, is signed and dated 1842. It was brought by its owner to him in 1879 and offered for sale, and we bought it. This picture shows that Watts had made a distinct step forward towards "finding himself," especially in the manner in which the structure of the forehead and the orbits of the eyes were understood and painted—likewise in the refined dignity of the pose of the gentlewoman of those days, but it is small and "tight" in character compared to the work Watts executed while in Italy and ever after.

He talked to me often of his stay in Italy while the

[1] In the exhibition of Watts' paintings, lent by himself, which took place in Leighton House two years ago, examples were chosen with a view of showing the history of the artist's working life between the years 1836 and 1902. The earliest specimens of his paintings recalled curiously the work of George Morland.

[2] The "Aurora," dated 1842, is a picture which has qualities of beauty in the work which rival the later work, "Life's Illusions." It is the first picture which indicates the influence of Pheidias in the treatment of drapery. "The Wounded Heron," painted still earlier, is in quite another style, but most finished and delicate in its workmanship.

[3] See illustration.

guest of Lord and Lady Holland.[1] He told me that his long visit to them of four years came about in this wise. He had been given a letter of introduction to Lord Holland, then our Minister at Florence, but being absorbed in the wonders of art in the beautiful city, he had not thought of it till the day before he intended leaving Florence. An acquaintance told him that the person who gave the letter might think it ungrateful if he did not use it, so Watts left it with his card at the Legation. Lord Holland asked him to dinner, and this resulted in his remaining as Lord Holland's guest for four years. He became as one of the family; nevertheless, he described to me how his two chief objects during that time had been to continue his serious studies with unabated zeal, and at the same time to prove his gratitude to his host and hostess by in no slightest way presuming on their kindness. There was in Watts a personal refinement and a very scrupulous sensitiveness which put him easily on a friendly footing with those of gentle breeding. He would say he felt at home and comfortable with the aristocratic and with the peasant classes,

[1] Lord Holland was related to my husband—his grandfather, the fifth Viscount Barrington, having been first cousin to the celebrated Lady Holland. My father-in-law and others of his family described to us many interesting matters concerning Holland House in the old days, and especially with regard to their cousin, Lady Holland. Curiously enough my husband's maternal grandfather, Lord Chichester, was one of the famous party of whom Lady Holland (then Lady Webster) and the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire were the other members, when the tour to Italy was made, Lady Webster writing the Diary, and "Tom Pelham" (afterwards Lord Chichester) painting the scenes of travel in water-colour. These sketches are now in Holland House, with the exception of two which were given to my mother-in-law, Lady Catherine Barrington, by Lady Holland when she was very old, saying at the time she gave them that she had always considered "Tom Pelham had been the angel of her life." His advice, however, as to conduct, she did not follow! Lord Holland took Watts once to dine with his mother at Holland House, but from his description it must have been a very uncomfortable evening. Evidently neither did Lady Holland take to Watts nor Watts to Lady Holland.

but with the self-asserting and prosperous middle class he felt out in the cold. Often would he deplore to me that he had not a name to sustain. He would have enormously valued the possession of great ancestors, whose position he would have been proud to keep up, and whose intrinsic superiority, which had won for them their high position in the past, he would have striven to emulate. The long visit to the Hollands was the turning point in Watts' life, as regarded the future social position he took in the world. He told me, however, when he was nearly sixty years of age, that, looking back on the past, the happiest days he could remember were those when, as a student, he was leading the simplest of lives and working hard in London, going often in the evenings to Clapham, where he joined a class for choral singing, music being ever to him a source of the greatest delight. My own experience of Watts certainly leads me to believe that it was in an atmosphere of great simplicity, innocence, and incessant industry that he felt happiest and his best self, though one side of his nature, not the highest, beguiled him at times on to other lines. Much contact with people was a trial to him. It excited a nervous uncertainty and an unreasonable diffidence. He had not acquired that ease through early habits and circumstances in general society which would have made him feel quite comfortable in it; he felt conscious of having to play a part, and this necessitated an effort which he knew well was wasted energy, and led him often into grooves not in accordance with his high aims and desire for the best and noblest. "I should like to go into a monastery," are the words that end one letter in which he deplores the difficulties consequent on his nervous conditions. He described to me how his first fit of deafness came on, when he and Sir Charles Newton travelled to

Greece together. They went *viâ* Constantinople, in order to procure a firman to enable them to make certain excavations in Greece. Lord Lyons was at that time our ambassador at the Porte, and Watts and Sir Charles dined one evening at the Embassy. It was a large dinner party, and what with the lights, the confusion of sounds, and the varied odours of dishes, he felt in a maze, and then, he said, for half-an-hour became stone deaf. Throughout his life the worst fits of deafness were always caused by nervous strain or agitation.[1]

Owing, however, to the considerate kindness of his host and hostess, Watts, while staying with Lord and Lady Holland, felt that the advantages far exceeded the incongruities which arose from living in their society. He met those whose work was linked with the important interests of the world. He felt an echo in his own nature to those larger views, those wide, comprehensive aspects of life which are developed by important responsibilities, living the while in that gracious Italy whose buildings, paintings, sculptures all still are evidences of the fact her written history records —namely, that the culture of beauty in olden days held a place in the governing of the country and in grave matters of State; that the influence of the Arts was ever present to lend a grace to the action of all classes. His own aims were encouraged and strengthened, and his ambition kindled, to place the art of his country on the same level which was claimed for her in the truly greatest civilisations. Probably no soil could have been more stimulating to the growth of

[1] When Mr. Barrington and I went with him to Oxford, when he took his honorary degree, though he went through the ceremony apparently with but little discomfort, he could not face the luncheon given after the function to those and their friends taking part in it, and left us, to wander alone in the meadows and to eat a packet of sandwiches with which he had provided himself, rejoining us only at the railway station.

one side of Watts' genius than that in which it was planted during the four years when he was with the Hollands.

Watts often spoke with regret of the little encouragement which the English school of painting gave to the higher lines of thought in art in the days when he was a lad, or to any originality in the treatment of a subject. His temperament being one which made it difficult for him to be self-assertive in matters of feeling, he felt he had to climb to his right place by sheer industry and consistency of aim, proving by his own work the worth of his principles. But in the great art of Italy he found sympathy and better teachers than any he had had. Here his own imagination was awakened and his artistic instincts were set loose and unharnessed from the traces which had confined them. The grand style which always made a strong appeal to Watts' sense of nobility was no uninspired theory in the great works of Ghirlandaio, Massaccio, and Orgagna, but the natural outcome of instinctive preference for what was noblest in nature. Italian Art did for Watts what the Italian inheritance in Rossetti's nature did for the pre-Raphaelite school a little later. It awoke the fervour, the feeling for grace and distinction latent in Watts' nature, and gave him the courage to go and do likewise—not the same by copying the great masters' works—but by carrying out his own work on the same lines as theirs. Among the early Italians, Orgagna was the master he spoke of with most enthusiasm, and it was clearly Orgagna's genius[1]

[1] Especially as shown in the paintings on the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa. "The Triumph of Death" left an indelible impression on Watts' mind. Far from ever wishing, however, to create the terrorising effect which Andrea Orgagna's depictions might inspire in many, Watts desired that his pictorial rendering of the inevitable end of all human existence should carry with it only the suggestion of solemnity and mystery—the carrying out of the laws of nature by an all-powerful will, to which men should resign themselves without fear, and with the trust of children who accept with obedience their father's control.

which stamped itself most deeply on Watts' imagination, though it was Titian's actual painting which inspired his greatest admiration. He told me he was always seeing "Titian in nature." One evening as we were standing on the lawn in his garden at Little Holland House, and the warm light of late afternoon was weaving threads of glowing gold through the branches of a group of thorn trees, I remember Watts exclaiming, "There, is that not Titian?"

The paintings done in Italy, and during the first years after his return, evinced Watts' natural love of brilliant colour and his exceptional power of drawing, but hardly his own nature and temperament. He had yet to "find himself" in his work. His power of drawing was not merely that of the draughtsman who has the natural gift of almost unconsciously taking in the shape of an object and rendering it on a flat surface, nor merely the sculptor's eye who discerns different planes in form so as to reproduce it in the round. Watts, besides possessing these gifts, realised the ingredient which gives to line and form a sense of size, dignity, and noble beauty. This drew him with such sympathy to the art of Pheidias. While staying with the Hollands he drew and painted many portraits of their friends. Even in those where the work in pencil was generally small and delicate, a sense of style and size is to be traced. But neither the paintings nor the drawings, nor the work he sent home for competition for the prizes offered by the Royal Commission, showed the full genius of his own individuality. His nature had hitherto been too much overshadowed by the influence of people and of great art. He told me that though Lord Holland wished him to prolong his visit and live with them when they returned to England as he had done in Florence, he felt it would not be wise for him to do so. The aims and serious intentions

GENERAL SIR FREDERICK ADAM

From Drawing in Chalks by G. F. Watts

he wished to carry out in his work necessitated the independence and the solitude which he could only fully command if he lived alone.

Between the time when he commenced to work in the studio at No. 10 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, in 1848, and the time of his settling in the new Little Holland House studios when we became his intimate friends in 1876, the pictures were painted which, if considered from the acknowledged standard in art, are, I think, the finest work as technical painting Watts ever produced; for instance, such pictures as the portrait of the model which he called "Bianca," the exquisite painting on panel called "Choosing," and "Life's Illusions." These pictures, in the qualities of completeness, perfection in the actual manipulation of the brush, and lovely, pure, unlaboured colour, would, I believe, hold their own in the Brera, in the Tribune, or any other of the treasure mines of the greatest paintings in Europe. Besides this class of work, Watts had painted many decorative works in a larger, freer style, some on canvass and some on the walls of his studio in Charles Street, others in Little Holland House.[1] He was anxious to revive, if possible, the decoration on walls by figures, in order to accustom the eye of the modern world to the aspect of the human form nobly treated and artistically clothed. He thought that if original work on a high level was not forthcoming, the idea might be carried out by enlarged copies from first-rate designs, distinct outlines being painted on the walls of rooms and filled in by flat colour. To exemplify this, he enlarged many of the illustrations of Dante's *Inferno* and *Paradiso* by Flaxman, and

[1] These are now on the walls of the music-room in Melbury House. Also in my studio and in other rooms are paintings, copies of Flaxman's designs, which came off the walls of the old house.

painted them on the walls of the old Little Holland House. Some of his finest portraits were also painted during these years. His own, which belonged to Sir William Bowman; also the portrait of the great oculist himself, Mr. Russell Gurney, Calderon, the artist, and several others, which as simple portraits and specimens of complete workmanship, are among the best which in Watts' own opinion he ever painted.[1] But these works, though evincing the highest qualities in drawing, composition, and fine restrained colour, do not yet touch the essence of Watts' genius. "Life's Illusions," "Time and Oblivion," "Satan goeth to and fro seeking whom he may devour," "The Good Samaritan," and other Scripture subjects, likewise a group of singularly interesting tragic subjects, full of pathos, and showing a very human side of Watts' character, were among the first pictures he painted which indicated a moral or symbolic tendency in his art. From having seen very opposite aspects of life, the contrast in the lot of different human beings was forcibly realised by him. Though his natural preference for the refinements of life resulted in his finding himself surrounded by these as soon as he could command his own way of living, he was nevertheless haunted by the tragedy of poverty and need. His disapproval of extravagance rose at times to passionate resentment when conditions of sad distress were realised and often exaggerated in his mind. The outcome of these feelings is to be seen in his pictures—"Found Drowned," "Under a Dry Archway," "The Song of the Shirt," and the "Irish Peasants during the Famine." Pathos and dramatic power in painting could hardly go further. Still, it is not even in these

[1] It was when I was collecting for him the scattered works for his exhibition in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1882, that I remember most clearly his giving me his views as to the comparative artistic value of his pictures.

G. F. WATTS

From a Photo taken in 1854

WALL OF STUDIO IN MELBURY HOUSE GARDEN

Showing Enlargements in Colour by G. F. Watts of Designs by Flaxman for Dante's "Inferno" and "Paradiso," 1855

pictures, though they give one very real true note of Watts' own being, that we reach, I think, the inborn power of the great Celtic artist, which echoes no school, no master, no genius but his own. And yet, though it may sound somewhat contradictory, he was most himself as an artist when he fell under the influence most strongly of another genius, or of another personality. It was then he became quite non-theoretic and quite spontaneous. He possessed the strongest power of sympathy, and would pride himself on the fact that nearly all his sitters became his friends. Indeed, he said that if he was not in sympathy with his sitter he felt he could not get on. That was the case when he painted Carlyle's portrait. Watts described him as not even taking the trouble to hide that a sitting was a dreadful bore to him, and he was constantly asking when it would be over. Sympathy with Watts went further than the feeling of which he was conscious, his perceptions went into the unrecognised crevices of the psychic realm : that realm in which the Celtic and Slav genius revel. I should cite as those pictures in which I feel the deepest and innermost nature of Watts' genius was recorded as being—"Watchman, what of the Night?"[1] "Ophelia," "Brynhildr," "Magdalen," the four small pictures of the Riders on the White, the Black, the Red, and the Pale Horses of the Apocalypse, the "Sic Transit," the three small sketches of the "Eves," "Hope" (especially as it was first sketched in), the "Joachim," the small picture of "The Court of Death," "The Dove that returned in the Evening," "Paolo and Francesca," "Haystacks," "The Sea Horses," "Choosing," "The Island of Cos," "Cain," "Jonah," "Evolution," "Love steering the

[1] There are two pictures of this subject. A clever artist friend made an excellent replica, on which Watts also worked ; but the one to which I allude was the original canvass first named "Joan of Arc."

Barque Humanity," "Progress," and "Lilian," the last picture Watts saw on the walls of the Royal Academy of his own painting.

In his first impulse when painting his most celebrated subjects, "Love and Death," "Time, Death, and Judgment," "The Three Eves" ("Newly Created, Tempted, and Repentant"), and in the large canvass of "The Court of Death," there was doubtless the same vital inner life, but the completed works to me lack that peremptory rush which stamps others of his creations with a convincing eloquence. They may have had it, but it is lost. Watts' genius was ever battling with his conscientiousness. Watching daily these pictures when they were being worked at, how many inspired passages have I not seen painted over and obliterated for ever by the conscientious labour of uninspired hours! A great theme, needless to say, never alone made a work of art great. The painter's business is first and foremost to paint, and no one was ever more conscious of this truism than was Watts. It is the vibrating quality in the actual laying on of the pigment which, equally with the imaginative conception and the inspired design, secures to the greatest art the influence it commands. The touches themselves must be inspired creations, no less than the conceived idea and design. They are the outward, hardly conscious reflections of some inward vision, some deep emotion;—some influence of beauty that has crept into the touch, into the very pigment itself; it is these which produce the real triumphs in art.

Watts at his best was great as an actual workman, and knew full well that conception and interpretation must agree; feeling that, to a true artist, right expression is the inevitable sequel to a fine idea—that they are inseparable. In such art as his happiest genius has created, we feel there is the

same convincing harmony which exists in the best lines of great poets when idea and word are created simultaneously. When Byron wrote the line describing love as "a glory circling round the soul," he did not wait to think of the best words in which to explain his idea: they came. And so with the painter of genius—study, knowledge, patient enduring labour may form the solid foundations, but when the moment of expression comes, the touch must be inevitable. When Watts' genius emancipated itself from all traditions, when the effects of early evangelical stiffness of conscience vanished, and,—having emerged from the overpowering influence of the great masters of the past,—his genius faced nature alone, that nature generally taking the form of human beings with whom he felt an intimate and spontaneous sympathy, we get his highest eloquence in art: art which is above all things itself—not Pheidias nor Orgagna nor Titian—but Watts. Such work requires no enhancing by favourable comparison with standard works in the Tribune or in the Brera, nor anywhere else—it is itself.

Many of us are apt to estimate more highly the things we do with difficulty than those things that cost us no effort, though intrinsically they are worth more. This was often the case with Watts. His genius being so instinctive that he hardly even recognised its existence, he seemed to set less value on it than on those ambitious efforts which caused him much labour, and in the creation of which he used conscious thought. I doubt whether he ever realised whence came the inspiration which resulted in his most glorious visions on canvass. In "Watchman, what of the Night?" (first named "Joan of Arc") it was not Isaiah, but the dramatic genius of his sitter influencing the artist's imagination in a psychic manner, which made the work what it is, a quite inspired creation. Again in the "Ophelia" as I

first saw it, before Watts retouched it,[1] it was not the influence of Shakespeare, but his sitter's creation of the part that lent the picture its exquisitely tender pathos. In the finest piece of sculpture Watts ever achieved, the bust of "Clytie," again it was an echo of the dramatic feeling of the same sitter which gave value to the conception and inspired the working of the marble, which Watts chiselled himself.

In the Joachim, a creation on the same high level, the value does not lie in the fact of it being a good portrait of the actual features of the great musician; in fact there are many of his friends who never thought the likeness good. It lies in the fact that in the painting is an embodiment of Joachim's feeling for music. By some subtle sense the painter has entered into and seized the genius of his sitter, and has translated through the medium of line and colour the essence of the deep feeling which inspired the master's interpretations of Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms. Watts has immortalised in this portrait a reflection in painting of that unsurpassed art, which has affected so deeply all true music-lovers of our generation. The brow is weighted with a sense of the grandeur of great harmonies and melody; the fingers vibrate with the fervour of thrilling sound. The whole canvass is infused by a sense of such music as Joachim can produce.

Again, in the "Brynhildr" is another example of Watts' invention being inspired by sympathy with a mood in another

[1] One evening, when the large studio was lighted with but one candle, which Watts held and shaded by his hand as he threw the light on to the "Ophelia," which he had taken out from a heap of old canvasses to show me, I saw this picture for the first time. It struck me as one of the loveliest surprises I have ever seen in art. It haunted me for days, the individuality was so strong, the poetry in it so tender. I suppose Watts thought there might be something in it, or he would not have cared to show it; but I am certain he did not realise the power inherent in the painting. Nothing of the kind has ever grieved me more than that he ever touched the canvass again.

"BRYNHILDR"

From the Painting by G. F. Watts, 1880

nature, the pictorial element in the work having been conceived while sitting over the fire in the waning light of a winter's afternoon, a green velvet hat having suggested the helmet and given the shadow on the face. A beautiful friend of mine kindly gave sittings to Watts for the "Hope." I do not think any one has recognised it as her portrait; nevertheless, no ostensible portrait ever gave the essence of her personality, nor the suggestion of the dainty refined distinction which emanated from everything she was or did, as does the "Hope."[1] Not only was nature used to carry out his visions, his thoughts, and feelings, but sympathy with the nature of others inspired the subjects of the visions, and so far such pictures are links between the purely imaginative works and the portraits. In the first sitting Watts would often catch an inspiration from his sitter which he afterwards lost. This was the case in the portrait of Matthew Arnold. Watts desired much to paint the poet, and as we knew him well the matter was easily arranged. I saw the portrait at the end of the first sitting. It was splendid; but Watts wanted to get more into it, and seemed unconscious of the fact that he had already caught something which could not be improved upon. He worked several days on it, the ultimate result being that the portrait was considered a failure by many of Matthew Arnold's relatives and friends. Watts was often overburdened by anxiety about his work, a feeling arising chiefly from a want of vitality and a want of health. Often would one day's work, achieved when he felt vigorous, be weakened by his labouring on it when he felt everything was an effort.[2] He had no time to get anxious over the superb

[1] I made a small copy of the picture in water-colour and chalk, and while working from it I realised this peculiar atmosphere most fully.

[2] He was doubly anxious when he was ostensibly painting for money. In March 1892 he wrote that his instincts were outraged by asking for money for

portrait he painted of Walter Crane, as his sitter was starting for America a few days after the first sitting. Here, as in the Joachim, the genius in his subject influenced Watts, and by general consent this is one of his finest paintings. He himself, however, did not realise this. "I am making a study of Walter Crane," he writes, "and am in a mess over it." In May 1892 he writes that its success surprises him. It is due, he really believes, to what he regards as its fault, a certain hardness of surface, the consequence of an ill-prepared canvass. He adds, "So much for real appreciation of art and its intention in these days." I believe that the superlative excellence in Walter Crane's portrait was due to Watts not having had time to spoil the first inspired impression.

Among the most unspoilt and inspired of Watts' works are a few in which no direct personal influence can be traced, notably the "Sic Transit." In this the noble texture in the painting, the impressive, tragic solemnity of the feeling in the design—unalleviated gloom though it be—raises it to a very high, if not the highest place, among his works. "The Minotaur" and the "Jonah" were the result of intense indignation in Watts' mind against certain evils. A painful subject had filled one of the evening papers. It was a subject we could not discuss, but he just alluded to it one evening in the most indignant terms. Next morning, about nine o'clock, I received a little note asking me to come in to look at something. It was "The Minotaur," virtually as we see it now, but rather more vigorous, as the touches he added

what *might not* be money's worth! He had absolutely determined against taking portrait commissions, not because he was independent of money considerations, but because at his time of life (he was then 75) he could not be at all certain of anything beyond the desire to do a good thing. If he painted a picture which was desired to be bought when it was finished, he should be very happy indeed to sell, as the purchaser could be able to judge whether or not the thing was worth the money.

after rather lessened than increased the force of the conception. He had painted it in three hours, from five to eight o'clock that morning. I remember feeling the intensest regret, when I saw what Watts had created in three hours, that his normal state of vitality made such power comparatively rarely present. Some feeling of great indignation, some intense enthusiasm, or other excitement produced from the mesmeric influence attached to the presence of another personality, were needed to stir the psychic forces of his Celtic nature from its state of normal lethargic melancholy. Conscience, a strong will, and a never-flagging ambition were the helpmates to his industry, and overcame all tendency to indolence; but other influences were needed before the depths of his genius were stirred.

The sensitiveness of the Celtic nature is often veiled, its emotional side being kept smothered under a curious kind of patient melancholy and secretiveness. It is rarely fully awakened except when a fire, seemingly outside its own consciousness, is lighted, and then with fervour it expresses itself. By nature Watts was secretive,[1] and many circumstances in his life had led him to be more so; but excitement over some thrilling interest would open the flood-gates at times, and, as in his most real pictures, the most real Watts would evince himself—the Watts all genius, spontaneity, and interest,—provincialism of class, theoretic principles, everything that was dull and a matter of course, thrown to the winds. In those moments he was indeed an inspiring companion!

There is much in common between the genius of the Slav and of the Celt. Nietzsche went so far as to trace a similarity in the origin of their languages. I feel much of the finest Slav music, which arouses such enthusiasm in our

[1] In a letter begging me to repress if I can the habit in a mutual friend of talking about people, he writes, "One never regrets holding one's tongue."

modern music-loving natures, to be in the same strain as that of Watts' genius. Tchaikovsky's tragic symphony and Watts' "Sic Transit" touch the same chord of profound impersonal melancholy, the intense and deep interest of both works lying beyond the circumstances of the human lot alone, touching those vaguer mysteries which float between the spiritual and the earthly conditions of the soul, recognised by the word psychic.

> "Man ties them both, alone,
> And makes them one;
> With th' one hand touching heav'n; with th' other earth."

But the other day I realised how identical is one strain in the art of the Slav and of the Celt. I was listening from the gallery in Leighton's studio to a fine rehearsal of Tchaikovsky's splendid trio for pianoforte and strings. Close to me was a cast of Watts' "Clytie." How intimately connected seemed the feeling of the two great works. As the sounds rose and I looked intently at the "Clytie," so full of yearning, passionate, lingering unrest, each creation seemed to add something of meaning to the other. Two sister spirits speaking in music and sculpture: the same strain of mysticism and melancholy, alike in composer and sculptor, uniting in creating one and the same deep impression.

On the same level to the eye was also the Pheidian frieze, which runs as a cornice along the studio wall. What complications in the sensibilities of the human race have the growing years of the world developed since that frieze of the Parthenon was sculptured, and Tchaikovsky's trio and Watts' "Clytie" were invented! How happy, simple, and unagitating is the art of that noble Pheidian procession, so serene and composed in its dignified beauty compared to the mystery of the half-hidden Slav passion surging out in

intricacies of musical sound, and to the straining, appealing gesture in the sculpture of the Celt. A stepping-stone between the eras which have produced these two so distinctly different emanations of genius is to be found in the "Slave" of Michael Angelo, a cast of which stood far down in the studio, near the musicians. Here is also a struggle, an unrest, a deeper suggestion of human passion than in the Greek art; but that particular wild note, as of a spirit emancipated from the shackles of the explainable, had not asserted itself in the melancholy imagination of the Southern Italian as it has in these days in our more mystic North.

Watts would often reason out his subjects, philosophise over them, preach on them, taking the idea as his text; but he was most right, and realised deeper the root of their *raison d'être*, I think, when he said he wished them to explain *themselves*, as do great anthems, by the same solemn effect that truly soul-stirring, elevating music produces. He ever laid great stress on the fact that the perfect human being was not an angel; that, as long as we are in the flesh, we must the more we are developed as human beings be guided and inspired partially by the senses. He felt his own genius stronger, more peremptory, when influenced by sensuous qualities, by enthusiasm for colour, and for the form which produced on him, as on the Greeks, an æsthetic feeling of delight beyond the cold, merely intellectual approval, with which it is regarded by many followers of the so-called classic school.[1] He often expressed it as his ostensible

[1] I never realised so strongly Watts' instinctive sensibility for form as when I used to see him chiselling the marble on the "Clytie." As I watched his subtle conception of the different planes and delicate curves, worked in innumerable facets, which he said would produce, he thought, a better effect of atmosphere and a more palpitating quality of surface than chiselling the form with more direct touches, and saw him strike and guide the chisel, an echo seemed to be awakened in my own sensibility for form. The delight which Watts was feeling himself

intention to arouse, by lofty harmonies of beauty in subject, form, and colour, an elevating response from the higher spiritual and emotional feeling rather than from the intellectual or purely artistic side of our human nature.

To analyse the Celtic temperament is not easy. It is secretive and involved by reason of its many intricate sensibilities. It becomes, however, strangely interesting to make the attempt when it is a case of a Celtic temperament being allied with genius. Melancholy and unexplained to itself, the ordinary specimen of the Celt has but little inner confidence. The flattering tongue of the Irish, the persuasive, gentle manners of the Somerset and Devonshire Celtic peasantry, are signs of a sensitiveness which recoils from criticism or admonition. Their natures are guided rather by instinct and imagination than by reason, and lack the self-centred power to hold their own in opposition to others. Neither Slav nor Celt is a born ruler of men, both being too much affected by the opinion of others to possess the power of leading. Their own lives being worked out more through these unreasoned instincts than by the restrictive formularies which educate most of us, knowledge and experience do not come to them through the same channel of standards and principles which the world has voted the right ones. They are consequently diffident in their dealings with their fellow-men.

What I should conceive to be the most typical form of

while chiselling seemed contagious, carrying with it a kind of mesmeric influence I never felt this to the same extent while watching him painting, though on many of his greatest pictures I have seen him work for hours ; not, however, on those which have been completed suddenly and with most inspiration. He was either quite alone or alone with his sitter when these were achieved. On the more laboured canvasses, on account probably of the deliberate methods he used, and the combined complications of colour, tone, and atmosphere which he aimed at, each touch of paint was too much regulated by studied intention to produce the magnetic effect which the touch of his chisel infused into a corresponding sense in oneself.

melancholy Celt, we saw while in Brittany. We lived in an old château for two summers in one of the loneliest parts on the northern coast, where the landscape, with its long dark limits of hill line rises against gray, sad skies, making a fit framing for the unwritten tragedy, the mute suffering of those very poor people. Records of past Seignorial grandeur still exist in this now almost forsaken land. Among the hydrangeas and roses in our garden was one of the old tower *pigeonniers*, such as those that made one of the chief grievances of the peasants that caused the French Revolution. In our journeyings we came on mysterious, romantic châteaux of beautiful architecture embedded deep in forests of curious weirdly-grown trees; among them the foxgloves shoot up taller than the tallest men, while on the down-like slopes rising round our Brittany Grêve de St. Michel, columbines grow wild, dangling their dainty heads, soft blue, against the silver seas.

> "And here and there, lock'd by the land,
> Long inlets of smooth glittering sea
> And many a stretch of watery sand." [1]

It is a land teeming with Arthurian legends. Ours was the very same wild coast where Isolda landed on that rough night to reach her dying Tristram. "Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!" Tristram exclaims, as he lies hearing the gusts sweeping that lonely shore, eagerly listening for a sound that would mean her approach. In the entanglements of those fantastic forest trees, where the foxgloves grow, it seems possible that Merlin might yet be entranced by Vivien, so old-world and out-of-the-world are those secret hidden wood-depths. But all these associations with a legendary world we took with us into that

[1] "Tristram and Iseult," Matthew Arnold.

remote corner of the world;—Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, Wagner, Burne-Jones, have brought these romances back and made them live afresh in our modern minds; but they are not in tune with what we really found in this land of the Celts. Pierre Loti flavours his book, "Pêcheurs d'Islande," with the deep passion and melancholy of the Celt, in a language in which a French writer of genius can explain them; but the very fact of explaining the temperament of the Celt in such telling words, which carry with them definite meaning, removes it in a certain degree from the real thing. The deepest tragedy lies dumb at the root of the nature; you catch a reflection of it at times in the hopeless glance of the eye of a Breton peasant, gazing from out its large orbit,—a glance that has in it pathos like that of an animal that looks at you, knowing it cannot explain itself to your human breed, feeling all the time a something you cannot feel. As you travel along the lonely roads in the remote country you meet peasants who look at you like that, and the look haunts you as if it had come from another world. And assuredly the real genius of the Bretons is a thing apart and separate from our modern world,—our modern ways? With them religion has stagnated into superstition, habits and prejudices have become stereotyped into inevitable courses, as unalterable in their eyes as are the laws of Nature herself, and in which pagan rites are still echoed as continuing customs. On the eve of St. John's Day, when driving over the widespread bare hill-sides, where in that lonely world glow-worms still gleam out from the banks along the roads, you come on a few hovels studded near each other, which form a little hamlet. There you see crouching round bonfires (*bons feux*) groups of peasants enacting a rite of semi-Christian, semi-pagan origin—the remnant, partly, of a fire-worshipping creed. Again, at times, in the evening

as we watched from the windows of the old château on the wild coast, flickering torches would flare out through the darkness, and piercing the howling winds and storm-driven rain, weird sounds of revelry would come to us, the revelry of a wake kept up all through the night round the corpse laid out in one of the hovels near our gates.

The idea of Death was a very constant idea with Watts. It was not merely a fact to his mind, it was a stirring interest, and had in it the power of moving his most creative impulses. Over and above his Celtic temperament there was in his nature so much besides. Though doubtless a very sensitive instrument on which other individualities played, which aroused by their stimulating influence the developement of his own creative power, his temperament was allied to a searching intellect, subtle powers of reasoning, and the traditions of an early strict religious training; above all, to that rare mould in human nature we call genius, which sees, apprehends, and comprehends instinctively a further, completer point of vision in things than does the ordinary man or woman. Genius is peremptory, the Celtic temperament is diffident, secretive, and intensely though shyly emotional. With his finely-pointed, subtly-distinguishing brain, Watts discerned every weakness in himself. He fought strenuously against outside influences diverting his own constancy of purpose and determined aims, and yet he felt the necessity of feeding his genius by outside influences. Watts might, and indeed did, feed much on the vitality of others, but such vitality was but added fuel to a fire which burnt in his own creative imagination, his own fervent, individual temperament, the temperament of the Celt. It was the something indefinite which explains itself but in part, though reaching to the very heart of mystery in all things that stirred most deeply his imagination, those questioning notes reflecting the

pathetic contrasts in life rather than definite themes weighted with solemn Fate, such as the Greeks commemorate in their tragedies. The melancholy note in the art of the Slav and of the Celt is left loose ended, a note of unexplained sadness, such a one as forms the inner thread of the wild, reckless bursts in Slav music. The upper surface may be gay and fearlessly abandoned, but the ground-work is a mystery and a wailing. It is the contrast of sad and gay, the story of all the world's real life.[1] You have it in the Hungarian dance which begins inside the inn where the corpse lies, but goes on in tune with the dancers and revelry outside. There is the music for both, interpreting with a strange tragic power the contrasts of life. Again you have it in the wakes in Brittany and Ireland. Why that revelry of wild emotion over the solemn fact of Death? Some deep spring is touched, and the native, timid reserve of the race, the secretive, shy reserve, is broken through, and its dæmon frees itself in a rush of emotlon.

So in Watts' painting. Behind the sensuous glory of colour, the richness of texture and quality, and the serenity of Pheidian form, we find a weird, melancholy note. In his greatest pictures, that note belongs to the theme as well as to the feeling. In the "Sic Transit" we have the triumph of his art. Here there is no rift rent in the sky—nothing to lift off the brooding melancholy of the theme, no hint to lead the thought upwards from the transitory to the eternal. After the first "Love and Death" was painted I often pleaded for the further theme, "Love Triumphant." It came at last, but compared to "Love and Death," "Love Triumphant" was a failure. The Love who was defeated,

[1] In 1904, a few months before his death, Watts writes:—"Glad and sorry; is not this an epitome of Life? Happy those with whom gladness outweighs the sorrow, for of the last there is, I am afraid, an overbalancing amount."

overpowered by the stride of Death, was a glorious, passionate, pathetic Love; and Death, the inevitable, was solemn and grand. The unanswered question, the mystery of existence, had more power to stimulate the imagination of the Celt than had the glory and the joy of a fixed faith.

Corresponding to Watts' principle as to the value of the flattened curve of a line as suggesting a far reaching circle beyond the confines of any actual design,[1] might be said to be those stretches of his own imagination which sought for subjects for his art in conditions which embraced further regions, and wider, more indefinite fields than those of the world we live in. The design which is stamped on the cover of this book is one which interested him. He painted it on one of the walls of the old Little Holland House.[2] Round the fiery ball of the sun circle the orbits of the planets. A little figure representing earth, though kept within her orbit, gazes upward towards the firmaments beyond—a true emblem of the genius which found its inspiration in ideas which sprang beyond the limits of our own earth and her comparatively restricted worldly concerns.

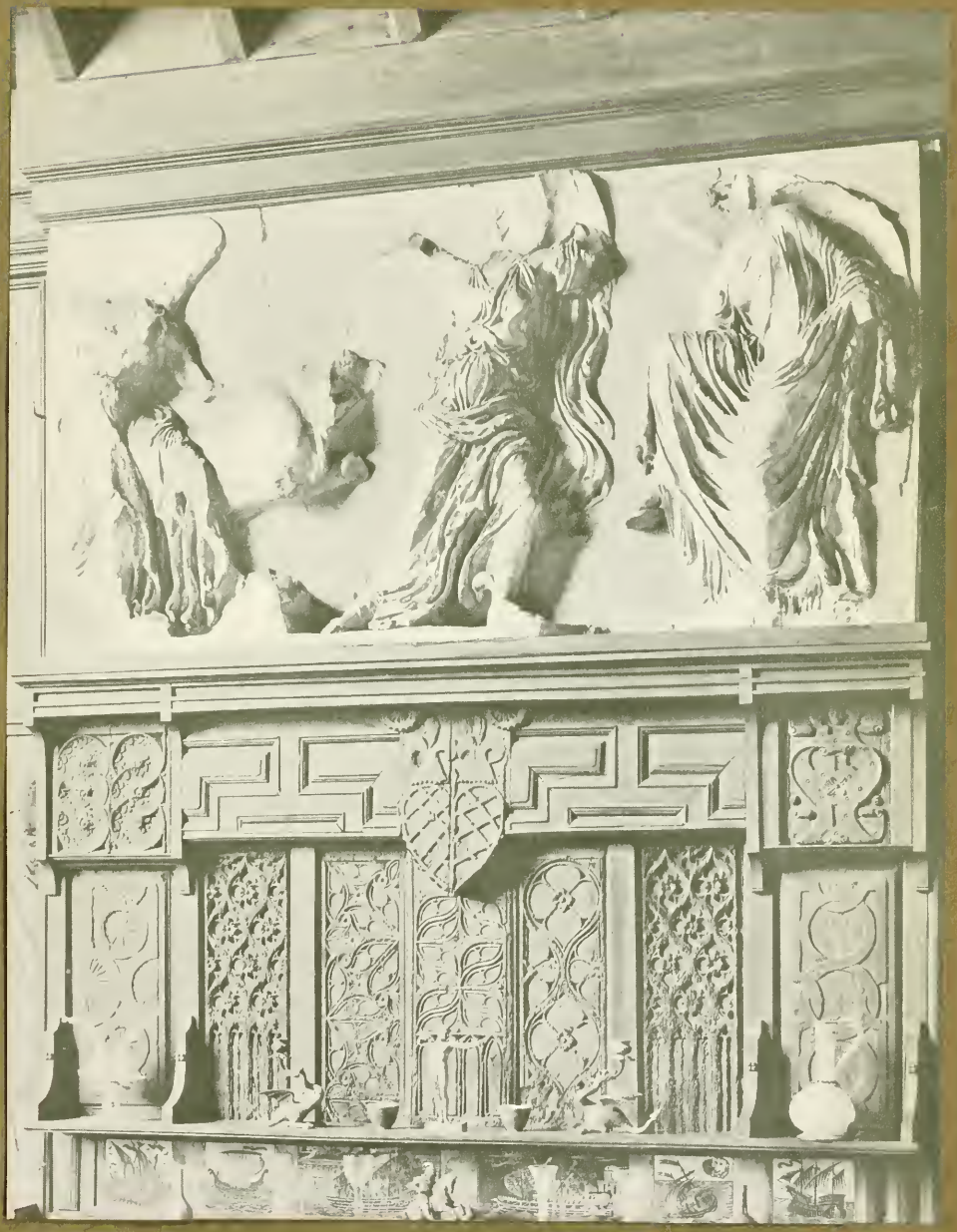
[1] Explained in the following chapter on Watts' sculpture.
[2] This wall painting is now in Leighton House.

CHAPTER IV

SCULPTURE

In early student days, before Watts went to Italy, he had become familiarised with the modern methods of sculpture while frequenting Behne's studio, where he drew from the antique, casts of which he found there. It was about this time, Watts told me, that Haydon had declared for the Elgin Marbles against the judgment of Knight the critic. Much discussion was going on with reference to the value of different phases of so-called classic art. For some time the fashionable classic art had been Roman, not Grecian —hence the reason probably for Knight's mistake when he called the Elgin Marbles "late debased Roman sculpture." The principles of the Pheidian school of form, and its treatment in sculpture, were so little understood by the fashionable critic, that, seeing that these Greek works in no way fitted in to the admired art then in vogue, Knight denounced them as inferior art. Haydon had once given Watts encouragement in his study of these Elgin Marbles, and as soon as they were placed in the British Museum, Watts paid frequent visits to these matchless sculptures from his rooms in Charlotte Street. In this way he obtained his best training in the understanding of noble form from sculpture before he received his best inspirations from the paintings he saw while in Italy. The fact that keen discussions were aroused with reference to the Elgin Marbles excited Watts' further admiration and more intent study of

G. F. WATTS' TEACHERS



them. But it was only after he returned from Italy that he began actually to work at sculpture. Whilst there he had seen great things in sculpture and painting by the same hand, from the masters Orgagna, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michael Angelo. He, too, would aim at the highest, the most comprehensive utterances in art. No effort or industry should be wanting in the developement of the highest faculties he possessed in the service of the highest art. He had an unerring judgment as to those things that were best to aim at, and an indomitable courage in aiming at them. The result of his whole long life's labours is epitomised in George Herbert's lines:

> "Who aimeth at the sky,
> Shoots higher far than he that means a tree."

In his sculptor's studio attached to the new Little Holland House, the conditions in which his work was carried on were delightful to him. He told me that anything to do with building and construction of any kind had a great fascination for him. The "Hugh Lupus" and "Vital Energy" were both successively mounted on trolleys and run out on rails into his garden, so that for the most part it was in the open air that he worked on them. Before either of these large equestrian statues was begun, having modelled the small sketch for "Physical Energy" and had it cast, Watts made a framework of wood—a section of a horse—over which he nailed large sheets of brown paper, and cutting these to the shape of the horse, he drew lines in charcoal which indicated the action he meant to express. I was working one morning in the room nearest Watts' garden (it was before my studio was built), when he came to the paling of our garden, urgently begging me to come in for a moment at once. He was eager to propound a principle

which had suddenly dawned upon his mind while he was making the charcoal lines on the brown paper horse. The discovery interested and excited him. It was ever a great gratification to Watts to work impressions into principles and talk them out to a sympathising ear, thereby securing a permanent hold on them in his mind. The particular principle he expounded to me that morning was with reference to the suggestion of size, or the reverse, which different treatments of curved lines can produce. He had found, he thought, the cause why a "good" line in any work of art is composed of a series of flattened curves joined together, whereas a "bad" line is an even section of a small circle, therefore more tightly curved. The superiority of the "good" line lay in the fact that each flattened curve is a section of a large circle which, if continued, would find its completion far away out of the actual design, whereas the line which is part of a small circle, suggests a form contained well within a limited space. The mind in the one case is started with a sense of spring and size, whereas in the other it is restricted within the limits of the design which is before the actual eye. Whatever suggested growth in the imagination was to Watts the key-note of interest in all works of art. After showing me the charcoal lines on the brown paper which had demonstrated to him this principle, he turned to the "Theseus" which stood in the porch of the Iron Studio.[1] There, as in all fine form in art, were

[1] It was when seeing the cast of the "Theseus" in this position that I first fully realised the transcendent glory of this Pheidian sculpture. A climbing rose-tree grew round the porch, and the afternoon light towards sunset would spread a golden glow over the carmine blossoms and fall on the splendour of the Greek forms, adding that charm of sunlit bloom which can never be seen in the prison walls of a museum, and which, when I found myself on the Acropolis of Athens, made me long that we English should return our Pheidian marbles to their rightful home under the light of Grecian skies.

examples of his newly-established fact; also in vegetation, in trees; indeed wherever form expressed life, growth, spring, and onward movement, there was his principle to be found.

The difficulty that existed for Watts in the ordinary method of working the first design for a statue in wet clay, was that any contact with damp, or even damp in the atmosphere, gave him rheumatism. In wet weather he could not work at all in his sculptor's studio, and the clay model could not be left for months together without continual attention, and without, in any case, losing some of the precision of the modelling. An Italian sculptor, Fabrucci by name, was introduced to Watts about this time, who showed him a method which overcame these difficulties. He made a mixture of size and plaster powder in which he soaked pieces of tow, and it was with layers of these pieces of soaked tow that Watts achieved the modelling of "Hugh Lupus," and subsequently "Physical Energy," and also worked on the never-to-be-finished "Aurora." The tow and plaster hardened into a substance which Watts could cut, indeed almost chisel, into the forms he wanted. While wet, with the points of his fingers he would model this squashy substance into the rough form of the muscles. Fabrucci remained with him some years as an assistant. The "Hugh Lupus" was finished in comparatively few years, and we watched it being drawn down Melbury Road under an enormous sheet on its way to Mr. Moore's foundry at Thames Ditton. Watts was much relieved on receiving the telegram to say it had arrived safely. One morning I saw a beautiful sight in Watts' garden. The sun was shining gaily through the bright green leaves, clean in their May freshness, when through the trees a gorgeous white steed was led by a groom; a large, grandly-rounded Normandy animal,

brilliantly white—as white as the horse in Watts' "Sir Galahad"—with rippling, shining mane and tail, and partly covered with beautiful purple silk trappings. The Duke of Westminster had sent it to "sit" to Watts. He told me it did not help him much in finishing his statue, but the sight of it remained in his mental eye long after whenever he was painting horses.

The heroic statue "Vital Energy" is the greatest example that exists of Watts' persistency in endeavouring to complete a work; but the difficulties were almost insurmountable. The actual size of the work was perhaps the greatest impediment, for to cope with it successfully meant physical conditions which did not belong to Watts' constitution. An ingenious method of making changes in the lines of the horse had been invented, and I think probably this prolonged the work greatly. Iron bars had been made of the right length for the limbs of the man and horse—the length of these of course never changing as they represented the bones, and at the end of each was a hook or an eye. Before the muscles had been added to these bars the hooks were fastened into the eyes, and turned into the direction Watts meant the limb to take. If he wanted to alter any direction of the line of any limb after the modelling of the flesh had been added, he had but to saw through the tow and plaster, adapt the hook and eye to a different angle, and fill in the gap with fresh tow and plaster. This method was certainly most ingenious, but it led to many experiments and innumerable changes. Had Watts been able to work steadily on the statue with the first impetus of origination, the work would doubtless have been very different from what it is now. Indeed I have seen it actually pass through more than one phase, when I thought it carried out the very fine small sketch he made originally, with better success than it did

later. Having to take up the work for a few months only, and then having to leave it for many months, meant that Watts' mind had been directed and occupied in other directions between; and though he never lost the conscious purpose he wished to express, the fact of having to leave off and start afresh after a lapse of months prevented his continuing a happy vein of interest in it which might, if prolonged, have enabled him to finish it. He would often say, "If I could only go straight on with the horse I think I could make something of it." The hooks and eyes would not have been undone so often I believe had this been possible. He partly lost the impulse of the idea during the non-working months, and, trying to recover it, he made fundamental changes which put the finishing as far away as ever. After years of work on "Vital Energy," he writes on September 20, 1893, "My poor statue has been cut into pieces several times, the legs only are on the horse just now." The "Aurora" also did not advance. Watts' imagination had been fired with the account of the great Athena, the chryselephantine statue by Pheidias, for which the Parthenon erected on the Acropolis at Athens was the shrine. He hoped to carry out this figure of "Aurora" in gold and ivory. The breaking forth of daylight, the fearless strength of the sun's rays dispersing all darkness and gloom, was the idea he sought to embody in the erect woman's figure risen undraped in front of the folds of drapery which had covered her before the dawn. When Watts was eighty-six years of age, he showed it me and explained afresh how he still hoped it would be carried out in gold and ivory, adding that perhaps celluloid might be used instead of real ivory. The statue, however, never got beyond the stage it reached in 1880. He describes in letters how he had been cutting her about and making very important changes. He told us that he had used as

models for this figure a life-guardsman and the girl from whom he made the fine drawings on brown paper, and from whom also he painted "Daphne." I have always had the feeling regarding both statues—"Physical Energy" and "Aurora"—that the flatness of the planes and the straightness of the lines were exaggerated. Watts would undoubtedly have modelled the surface into somewhat rounder form had he ever reached the point of feeling quite happy about the design. In painting, even when he was not working from inspiring nature, he yet had the excitement in his love of colour to spur on his interest beyond the intentional and the theoretic aim; but with this medium of tow and plaster no inspiration in the actual manipulation could be aroused. The beautiful bust of "Daphne," of which he gave me a photograph, was modelled in clay, and would have been a worthy companion to "Clytie" had it been carried out by Watts' own hand in marble.

In the summer of 1903, in speaking of the statue of Tennyson he had begun, he told me it was "not good," and that he should never finish it.

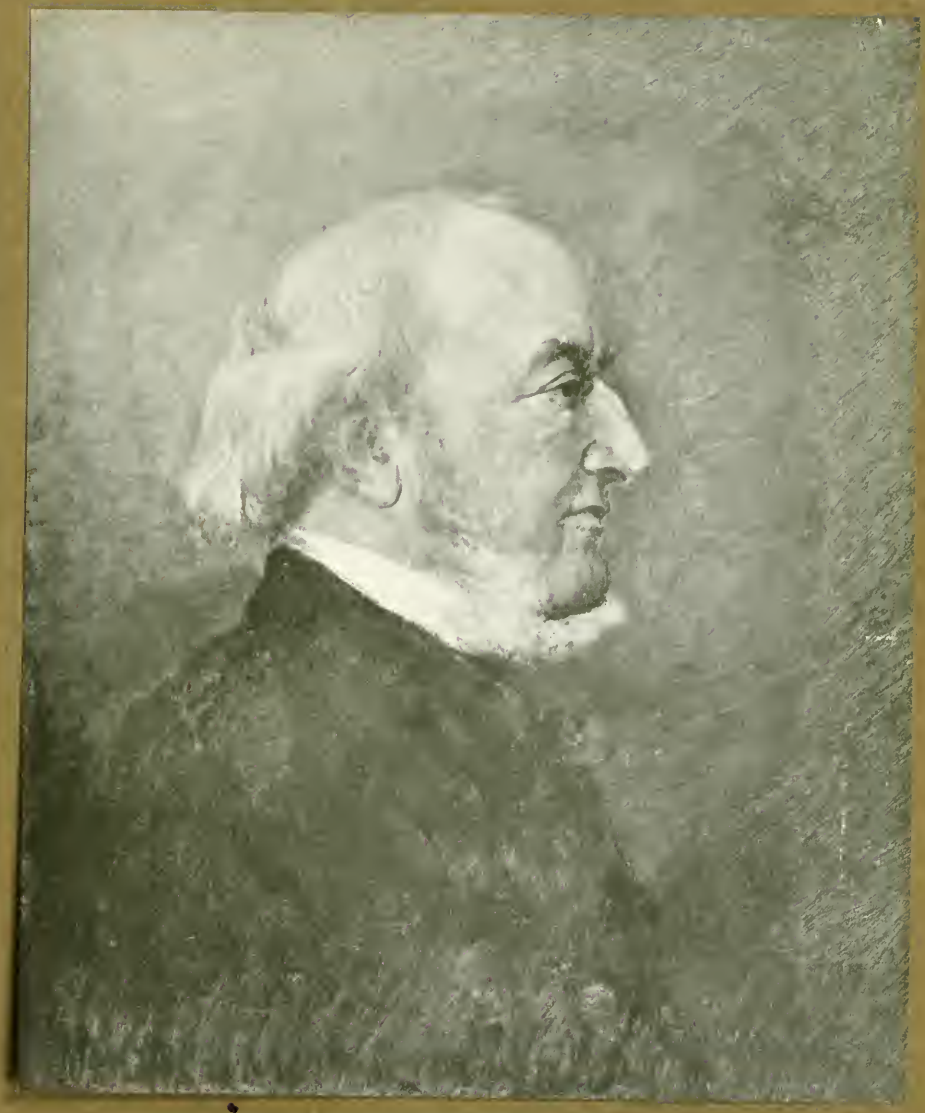
There is an interesting history connected with the Stanley[1] monument which was placed in the ancient church of Holyhead in 1897. During the last months of Mrs. Stanley's life, the restoration of the old Parish Church of St. Cybi, which is of great historic and architectural interest, filled her thoughts, and her plan included a monument to her husband, whom she had loved so dearly, and whose life had been devoted to the welfare of Holyhead.

In early life a deep impression had been made on her mind by a beautiful tomb in the *Certosa di Pavia*, near Milan, erected in memory of the Founder. She imparted

[1] The Hon. William Owen Stanley of Penrhos (twin brother of Lord Stanley of Alderley), for many years Lord-Lieutenant of Anglesey.

THE HON. WILLIAM OWEN STANLEY

From the Painting by G. F. Watts, 1877



SKETCHES FOR STANLEY MONUMENT

By G. F. Watts

MONUMENT TO THE HON. W. OWEN STANLEY
By Hamo Thornycroft, R.A.

to Watts her desire for an altar tomb with a recumbent figure and watching angels at the head and feet, and obtained his consent eventually to execute such a memorial. But Mrs. Stanley passed away in 1876, and left the completion of her lifelong dream as a sacred trust to her niece, Miss Adeane.

In 1877 Mr. Stanley sat to Watts for his portrait, which resulted in a wonderful likeness, recalling to all who knew him the characteristics of his fine head and impressive features.

Years elapsed, and the matter faded from the artist's mind. One February morning in 1884 Watts came in to see me while I was at breakfast, agitated by the receipt of a telegram announcing the death of Mr. Stanley in Wales, and requesting him to send some one to take a cast of the face. Watts felt that he was already overwhelmed with work, and that he had entered into other schemes which would more than fill his life. He begged me to pass on the request to Mr. Hamo Thornycroft, and to tell him that he would endeavour to obtain leave to transfer to him the commission for the monument. This he succeeded in doing; but a series of difficulties ensued which, but for Miss Adeane's perseverance, must have proved insurmountable.

Living as I did between the studios of Watts and Mr. Thornycroft, and being a connection of the Adeane family, I acted as a sort of medium in the transaction. One complication arose from the fact that Mrs. Stanley's legacy specified that the monument would be executed by Watts, and the executors only consented that another hand should undertake it if Watts collaborated. The fact of the two artists being friends solved this difficulty, and Watts illustrated his idea of what the design might be in sketches, he drew, in letters to me. (See illustrations.)

Mr. Watts followed the progress of the memorial with keen interest, and considered it one of the finest works of art executed in modern times.

While I was sitting to my friend, Mrs. Thornycroft, the sculptress, for my portrait, Watts would come in and indulge in a little manipulation of the clay. "Ah!" he would say, "there is nothing like clay. I wish *I* could use it." If, indeed, Watts could have used clay, fine works ranking with the "Clytie" might have been the result. As it is, very fine though certain views of "Vital Energy" may be, my own feeling is a sad one when I think of the great amount of Watts' very precious time that was spent on "Vital Energy" and "Aurora," and the eventual results when comparing these to the work which emerged from his painter's studio.

CHAPTER V

OUR FRIENDSHIP

WATTS wrote, as I have previously said, that the two things his experience had proved to be worth living for were to do as much good as possible for humanity and to have friends. Friendship with Watts I found to be a very inspiring and delightful addition to life. It entailed, however, great responsibilities,[1] and it also absorbed much time. As regarded my own companionship with him in his life of art and thought, it was so nourishing to all the best purposes I had in view for my own work, that I felt that no time which I was able to give from other occupations, nor trouble that I could take in helping him, could prevent my feeling other than his debtor.

Watts had a very distinct personality, and was possessed of great charm. That rare indescribable something, which is called *atmosphere* for want of a closer definition, clung not only about him personally but about his studio, and everywhere in his home.[2] Whenever I entered the house I felt

[1] Sentences such as "you must think for me," occur in his letters. He depended much on the judgment of others with regard to matters outside his studio life.

[2] I remember well when I took my brother-in-law, W. R. Greg, for the first time to the new Little Holland House, though Watts was out, his being so much struck by the *atmosphere* of the place. It affected him as a charming combination of distinction and simplicity. Mr. Greg had in his youth lived with those who, though rich, aimed at carrying out the principles of plain living and high thinking. There was certainly this same principle pervading Watts' home at that time.

a flavour of truly civilised gentle influences and of satisfying interests, which seemed to be part of the very air one breathed in it. As in very holy people one is conscious when with them that their every thought and action is worked by the mainspring of their being—their consistency in living up to the faith they profess—so, in the atmosphere surrounding Watts and his work, consistency of purpose in carrying out the high impulses and aims which he had determined should guide his art, infused a peculiarly refined simplicity into everything surrounding him. One felt always that the right thing led the way. It was Watts and Watts alone whose personality dominated in his home and over every detail in it.

> "A grain of glory mixed with humbleness
> Cures both a fever and lethargickness."[1]

It was this "grain of glory" which made his confiding friendship in every sense helpful. It directed the thoughts on to higher levels, not only in art, but in all directions. As in training for a race the utmost care must be taken to be in the best physical condition; so Watts felt, he used to say, that in order to carry out his high aims his mental and moral nature must be kept up to its highest level. Another satisfaction in the daily intercourse we had with him arose from the fact that Watts always took his friends, to say the least, at their best. Nothing makes us better than to be believed in by those whose opinion we value. One of Watts' greatest pleasures in life was to feel enthusiasm. This seemed in him to be the natural reaction following nervous depression. He was so generous in his feelings of sympathy that he was apt to exaggerate both the merits of his friends and the value of their artistic performances, but however

[1] George Herbert.

incredulous the friend might be of meriting his enthusiastic praises, it was not the contrary of pleasant to be thus believed in by Watts.[1] Though "plain living and high thinking" was the aim of his life, daily intercourse with him was very far from erring on the side of serious dullness. A latent vitality and playfulness of mind could easily be aroused, and would quickly dispel his melancholy moods. It was not long before Mr. Barrington and I found out that the best help we could give to Watts in the solitary life he had chosen, beyond my helping him in his work, was to chase away the weariness which led to his melancholy in the hours of rest. I had learnt the value of an atmosphere of "all things bright and beautiful" when having to live with sensitive excitable nerves and the dejection often accompanying them, from one who, like my friend, Mrs. Nassau Senior, radiated to all around her the joy she herself felt in the beautiful gifts of nature we inherit as human beings.[2] In the lax hours of rest from his painting or sculpture, the dwelling on "all things bright and beautiful" was certainly the best medicine for Watts when he was weary. Pure, innocent, delightful thoughts and ideas would spring up in his mind with renewed vigour when inoculated by the vitality of other minds in sympathy with his own, and to ventilate these in conversation

[1] A piece of painting I had done pleased him. He said it was "nothing short of Holbein!" He praised it in the same terms to Leighton. The next time Leighton came to my studio I remember him saying, his eyes full of fun, "Now let's see the Holbein!" Leighton fully understood Watts. It was a wholesome counteracting influence to get criticism from Leighton on the work Watts praised. In the case in question, whatever my painting was like, it was *not* like Holbein. Watts was a splendid teacher, but no critic of the work of his friends. Leighton, on the contrary, criticised all work as he would his own—absolutely impartially, and with but one aim, to improve it by finding out what in it was wrong or lacking.

[2] This was my husband's mother, Lady Catherine Barrington, who retained to the end of a long life the beautiful happiness arising from feeling a joy in all that is best in the world, which the nicest, most natural children possess. Her motto was: "All things bright and beautiful."

was the best antidote for all his ordinary ills and ailments, mental and physical, even when he felt most tired out. I do not think Watts was ever really dull in those days even when quite alone, which he was at times for weeks together when his friends were away. His mind was too active for him to feel dull. He was but a moderate reader, but books, as well as adding to his store of information, suggested a great deal to his fancy. A book would start a train of ideas quite outside and beyond its own contents. At all times Watts' mind was prone to exaggerate any difficulties which arose in daily life; to be scared by imaginary dangers, and to get nervously excited over trifles.[1] He lived many hours alone in his studio. He felt work a great strain on his frail physique and sensitive nervous system. When that strain relaxed he had but little vitality left to combat alone any difficulties or worries. When we were in the country these worries would arrive to me by post in long letters which reflected the fears and agitations he was feeling, which five minutes' cheerful talk would probably have calmed and dispelled. He never got quite free from the thought of his work, so that a sympathy and interest in it, and in the great questions pertaining to his view of art, were a necessary accompaniment to the true intimacy of friendship. Such sympathy and interest I had no difficulty in giving—indeed, it was a great delight to do so. From a child the world of art had ever been a world of enchanted ground to me, also from a child Watts' art had been the art that had appealed to me as the most interesting. He no doubt greatly exaggerated the value of my performances; but neither he nor

[1] One evening when our boy and a little girl who was staying with us had gone with my maid to the Crystal Palace, and had not returned quite so early as we expected them, having missed a train, Watts became full of nervous anxiety. Very early next morning he sent in to know if they were *safe*, and later in the day he told me he could not sleep all night for the anxiety he felt about them.

any other could have exaggerated the interest and joy which beauty in nature and in the great art of translating it worthily has always given me. So our friendship was cemented and made very real by the fact that our real *point de réunion* lay outside and beyond any personal liking; there was a something we each cared for individually and enjoyed independently of each other which made a common ground on which we could meet and discuss our mutual interests.

So far as Watts' outward life was concerned his days passed absolutely monotonously. Before we came to live at Melbury House, while staying in Rutland Gate, we met him more than once taking his daily walk to Hyde Park Corner in the sealskin coat of Rossetti's studio memories. Later he would sometimes walk to Hammersmith to the studio of a sculptor friend, where he carried almost to completion the beautiful "Daphne" which was to be a companion to the "Clytie." Something occurred during the casting, and it was never fully worked out—a most grievous pity. When he started the Equestrian Statue and the Aurora—also never finished—which he carried on principally in the garden, he found he had had sufficient air and exercise without taking a walk, and preferred the relaxation of companionship and conversation. The most neighbourly kind of intimacy soon established itself between us. A few scraps of notes have turned up among his letters. One asks if I had an amusing book to lend him—no matter how stupid. He would gather all those I had lent him previously and send them in next day. In another he asks me to lend him, or give him if I liked, half a tumbler of claret. Again after a cold he wrote he was very seedy, but asked me to come in if I had a quarter of an hour, to receive his thanks for the champagne. His doctor desired him to give me his compliments and to say it is the very thing he would

have ordered if he had dared, but knowing Watts' objection to such things he had not had the pluck to do so. In another he wrote he was afraid by my sending the book and the apples (for which he thanked me), that I was not well enough to come in. He was beginning to think I was as clever at catching cold as he was, "and I thought I had the monopoly!" One other little scrap is too characteristic to be left out. I was bringing Lady Augusta Cadogan to see Watts' work, and she had also asked me to take her to Burne-Jones' studio. Watts had begged me to bring her first to see him as he dreaded her finding his pictures a great come down after seeing Burne-Jones'. But later he writes, "I find it will be more convenient to me if you take Burne-Jones' studio first. After all it is but vanity which makes me wish to come first and escape comparison, a base sentiment which should not be encouraged. What is, is, and one should not desire to make it seem to be other. I would beat every other artist if I could, but I would not put another man's work in a worse light, or place my own so as to give it an unreal advantage. Therefore I won't wish them to be first seen."

About this time I caught the mumps from my boy while I was staying with my sister. Watts writes on April 3rd, 1878, that he is so sorry to hear that I am ill. The only satisfaction is that I am with my sister. He hopes I shall soon be all right again. "Lady Darnley will, of course, be always most welcome to bring any of her friends to see my failures." His dear little adopted daughter Blanche, who is staying with him, writes also: "We are so sorry you have been ill, and hope you are better now. Signor hopes to hear soon that you are well again. Signor and I went to a concert at the Grosvenor Gallery yesterday afternoon. We are going to one at Mr. Leighton's on Tuesday. I hope we

shall see you again soon.—Yours affectionately, BLANCHE CLOGSTOUN."

It was during the early days of our friendship with Watts that he showed an interest in my having a suitable studio, and after he had discussed the matter with Mr. Barrington it was decided that one should be built at the end of our garden; and to this he would send his pictures for me to copy or enlarge, and here it was that he used to give me invaluable lessons on them, or on any models who were sitting to me. He would constantly insist on my doing my own work and carrying out many designs which I had made rather than that I should work on his. Before my studio was built I used to work in the iron house in his garden solely on his designs. He had asked us to have a gate made in the paling between the two gardens in order that he need not go out into the road to reach my studio. When he was working at his sculpture he wore one or other of two blouses I had given him, one a blue linen one brought from Brittany, prettily embroidered in white cotton, the other a genuine English peasant smock worked in a cottage in Somerset. Neither seemed a costume to appear in even in our semi-country roads in Kensington, and Watts had not a moment to give to any unnecessary changing of garments. I had had my studio walls lined with casts of the Parthenon Frieze, and the figures from the Nike Athena Temple on the Acropolis. Watts' eye always lingered on these while there, and he would point out the special character and beauty of the form and compare it with any model who might be sitting to me, to show how full of truth to nature is this work of the Pheidian school, while at the same time it was treated with such breadth and decorative feeling. I cannot be too grateful to Watts for having taught me to analyse the qualities in which lay the perfection of Greek

art, for it deepened my insight into the work which had always possessed a strong influence over me.

When we had first settled in Melbury House, he had written to say,[1] that he had found it necessary to portion out his time in lots—such a time for work, for receiving people on business, and for seeing friends, and separate times for seeing these last—asking us, as we were on the spot, to take from one o'clock to three (he dined at one), or the evening hour from six to eight. The first was quite impossible for us; but, as often as we possibly could, and that was nearly every evening for eight years when we were in London, we went in about six. The busiest people naturally have to lead the most monotonous lives when the work is such as that Watts was doing, so we did our best to fall into his arrangements. He was fond of seeing people if they would come to his studio, and therefore I would often take in friends and acquaintances I thought he would like to see between two and three o'clock. It was always a happiness to Watts to see beautiful people, so I would always endeavour to take all our beautiful friends in to see him. Only the most intimate were admitted in the evening hours, and that but rarely. Among these were Mrs. de Morgan (then Miss Pickering), Miss Ida Verner, both artists, and my sister, Mrs. Greg. Evening after evening the same thing happened. I would go in first, Mr. Barrington generally joining us a little later. In the winter months Watts was in his sitting-room, always in the same claret-coloured velvet armchair reading. (He never painted by artificial light.) The servant having opened the door and announced me, the book was thrown aside, the spectacles taken off, he would rub his eyes with his fingers and almost invariably begin with, "Well,

[1] This letter has no date but "Saturday morning," and having been sent in by hand has no post mark, but it must, I think, have been written in 1878.

PHEIDIAN FRIEZE SURMOUNTED BY COPIES OF FLAXMAN'S DESIGNS

By G. F. Watts

what's the news?" That little scene, as it was enacted so many hundreds of times in precisely the same manner, has become stereotyped in my memory. I have but to shut my eyes and I see it before me. The most deeply interesting news was naturally how the work got on, how certain experiments with colours had answered, or what pictures had been seen. Watts had what we called "field days" with certain pigments. One day it would be the effect of burnt sienna rubbed over a ground of light red; another, the effect of ultramarine over raw umber, or various other combinations of warm or cool tint, always simple colours, generally the earths.[1] How deeply interesting were all these experiments and the different results. I used to try to transmit our precious discoveries to Leighton, but he was somewhat sceptical as to their importance, and would exclaim, "Oh, la cuisine, Mrs. Barrington! la cuisine!" Watts had committed one wholesale piece of extravagance. He had bought a large bottle of pure ultramarine (ground lapis lazuli) in the powder. He used no blue but this, thinking every other inferior and less precious in quality. Not only were the colours but the grounds subjects of endless experiments by Watts. The quality he disliked most was that of an oily "painty" surface. He was long seeking for a ground which would at the same time be absorbent and safe. He tried canvasses rubbed over with *gesso*, but he found the *gesso* was apt to work up into the paint.[2] Watts also tried painting on

[1] Watts went to Windsor & Newton for his colours, and from the first had given them strict instructions never to send him any colour, even if he had ordered it, which was not known to be absolutely safe. He gave me the book which Windsor & Newton had published giving the analyses of the colours and how to use them with safety—"Field's Chromatography; or, Treatise on Colours and Pigments as used by Artists." An entirely new and practical edition by Thomas W. Salter, F.C.G.

[2] An example of this result is now to be seen at Leighton House. Leighton had followed Watts' advice and had tried a *gesso* ground for his picture entitled

an absolutely raw canvass without any preparation whatever; but this entailed too lengthy a process for ordinary work, the mere getting the colour on involving so much labour. He painted one charming head of "Blanche," his adopted daughter, on muslin stretched over the canvass; but eventually decided on one specially prepared for him by Smith his frame-maker, which was only semi-absorbent. Before beginning a picture he would often paint over his canvasses with some colour which would be opposed to the tone he intended a picture to have, on the same principle followed by the artists who painted the famous old Venetian and Cordovan leather. They spread a silver ground for designs which were to be carried out in gold, and a gold ground for designs which were to be carried out in silver. Watts dried the oil out of his colours by putting them on blotting-paper, reducing them to a texture like putty by keeping them under water. His colours, when he used them, were nearly as dry as pastel, but without, of course, the crumbling quality. Quite new brushes were, he said, almost useless to him. He would wear the outside bristles down on a background, or by merely rubbing them on a hard surface till they became a stiff little pyramid the shape of a stump used for chalk drawings, and then they became great treasures. He said he believed the worst thing to paint with was a paint-brush—"except the wrong end"! He would use a paper or leather stump or the handle of an old tooth-brush filed down to a point,[1] but the best of all, he thought, was the finger. When the putty-like pigment

"Actea, or the Nymph of the Sea," but finding that the *gesso* lifted off the paint, he abandoned that canvass and painted the picture on another. The unfinished picture is among the sketches in Leighton House.

[1] I have still many of such treasures which he gave me to use instead of brushes; also horn and ivory paper-knives, which were to be employed as he showed me on his own paintings.

which he put on the canvass in distinct touches was nearly dry, he would sometimes take a paper-knife, and, using the flat part, would rub it over the touches, smearing them together. He would not touch the painting again till the smeared surface was quite dry. Then he would work partially over it. In this way he contrived to get a bloom of atmosphere into his painting, a quality which he invariably aimed at. Watts possessed an extraordinary amount of ingenuity, and thoroughly enjoyed using it, the actual playing with the paint being a source of great interest and pleasure to him. In working out his established methods he ever kept his mind and eye open to new ideas and suggestions. I have often heard artists make the remark that Watts wasted much time in making new experiments. He told me, however, that in watching nature very closely he was constantly seeing various effects which required different treatment. Discussions over the particular discoveries of the day always ended by his saying, when the servant came in to lay the cloth for his evening meal, "I hope I have improved 'Love and Death'" (or mentioning whichever picture he had been chiefly working on). "I may have spoilt it—I don't know! Come and see!" or some words to this effect. Then he would take the flat candle-stick that was invariably placed for him on the end of the book-shelf near the door, a paper spill lying in it. Lighting it from the fire, he put the unburnt half on to the moulding above the fireplace. Night after night for all those years this process was gone through in precisely the same manner. I would often warn him that he might burn down his house some day through the little economy, and he would generally answer in the same words, "I am very careful; I don't like waste,—even of half a spill!" Then, candle in hand, I following, he would go into the passage up the five

steps to the double doors of the studio, through the enclosed passage between them, where, from a mysterious little window, we would look down into the sculpture studio on to the giant horse and its rider—"Hugh Lupus" first, and later, "Physical Energy"—huge ghost-like apparitions as seen by the faint light of the solitary candle; then through the second door into the large painting studio,—a high space of darkness just visible by the one light, and perhaps a few dying embers in the grate. Holding his hand in front of the candle, Watts would throw the light on each part of the canvass in the different pictures on which he had been working that day. He was always eager for criticism. "Do you think I have improved it? I work on till I can't see what I have done," he would often say.[1] The contrast was striking between the impressive strength and size of the paintings and the sensitive frailness of the small hand held up so as to shade the light from everything but the mighty work it had achieved. What a wonderful power had the spirit and mind of this fragile, ageing figure to create and ring out grand anthems in colour and design! It suggested to me the power of a little bird, small and hidden among the branches of a tree, which can yet fill a whole landscape with the fervour of its thrilling song. On those winter evenings, when entering the vast, dark, silent studio, where the earnest fever of the painter spent itself in arduous labour from sunrise

[1] My experience is that Watts invariably courted rather than resented criticism. In many of his letters there are proofs of this. When he was laid up he would ask me to go into his studio or into the gallery and write him my criticism. In the spring of 1886 he asks me to go into the gallery and look at "Love and Life," and give him the benefit of my impression, in order to help him to finish it. Again, "Thanks for your criticism of 'Love and Life'; it will help me. I sometimes have very discouraging doubts as to whether I have not lost some of my natural (younger) power of seeing the exact shade of colour. This would be fatal to the painting of flesh." His modesty and the uncertainty he felt regarding his own powers were truly astonishing.

STUDY FOR FIGURE IN "CHAOS"

From Fresco by G. F. Watts

to sunset, day after day, from one year's end to another, it felt as if rising into another order of life than that we are all living in these modern days, into an atmosphere that inspired aspiration and growth, while at the same time it was resting and calming to the nerves. The self-centred individuality of the great artist reigned in it consistently and alone.

Watts loved colour; solemn, full colour glowed on his canvasses—tints of autumn rather than of summer or spring; the hues of the chrysanthemum rather than those of the primrose or the hyacinth, the rose or the larkspur. At times it could become almost smoked and murky, too suggestive, I think, of decay. Watts, the Celt, could not help infusing an element of his sadness even into the richest schemes of colouring. These burn like tints in autumn in the sad waning of the year; fire of the beech tree, yellow of the chestnut, warm purple of the hawthorn in November, cinnamon gold of the coins that drape with drooping tassels the silvery shine of birch stems. The greens are full and strong like the rank wet grass of autumn, not vivid gold and emerald as in May and June. And weaving the glowing passages together there will be inlets of blue distance, dimming mists and vaporous films, uncertainties in tone and tint like those that float among these burning autumn leaves when they are aflame before they die. Like Brahms' music, Watts' colour seems in touch with the mystery and the undefined in nature; the touches are large and loose in character, however subtly suggestive of Pheidian form. As with the sounds from an organ as they rise and fall, floating through the great vaults of a cathedral, the farther the music wanders in the air the more precision and definiteness of touch is lost, but the more impressive become the harmonies; so on these large canvasses, the more they became enriched with solemn colour and subtle tone, the more they wandered

beyond the definite design, the more impressive they became as pictorial "anthems."

Day after day the ideas that were evolved reached a further expression, and evening after evening in those winter months we went in to see this further stage arrived at, by the light of the one candle shaded by the frail little hand. When the procession returned to the sitting-room, Watts ate his very frugal supper, we talking, or I reading to him. The meal was always the same—the cold remains of the dull little pudding made without sugar which had been hot for his dinner in the middle of the day, and a tumbler of milk mixed with barley-water: summer and winter, never any change. Even out of this very simple fare, Watts, if he was tired, would evolve a tragic self-reproach. To have as much as that distressed him; and when he thought of all the people who were starving he could hardly eat it! I often tried to impress upon him that if he refrained and gave the pudding to a beggar, the beggar would throw it away. It was not amusing enough as food for any beggars I had ever come across. He would be easily laughed out of his tragic moods. He attributed the great improvement in his health during the years between the later sixties and the eighties to his strict diet and his very regular habit of living; to the reposeful sense of seclusion and the monotony of the accustomed in all outward matters, which left his mind free to absorb itself in work. He almost lost the trying "brain sickness," accompanied by violent headache, which he told me had deprived him of quite half his working time when he was younger.[1] After his supper Watts would

[1] Later on when Watts suffered from complications of gout and bronchitis (these first started from a chill contracted when he went into the country one foggy winter's day for the christening of his adopted daughter Blanche's baby), his doctor urged him not to remain in Kensington during the winter. He also found later a change to the Salisbury diet beneficial.

often settle down to nonsense. He was like a child in his power of enjoying nonsense. Especially when Mr. Barrington was also in high spirits the fun would become rampant. Watts had accumulated many ridiculous stories. One upon another he would hurry them out. Terrible puns were made, every kind of off-shoot of high spirits which he was capable of rising to, and when we left him we felt the happy satisfaction that we had helped him to secure a good night. On other winter evenings, his vitality re-awakened, we would plunge into serious and interesting literature. Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" was a favourite book, particularly the part describing herbals and the cures they effected. Bacon's Essays, Ruskin, and, at times, the Old Testament. Any current literature that had reference to subjects especially interesting, such as criticisms on the art then being exhibited, we read. Some strange works Watts would get hold of. I remember two American books that greatly fascinated him, dealing with somewhat scientific, but distinctly fantastic, new ideas. When I mentioned these ideas to Lord Avebury, then Sir John Lubbock, he said they were quite unsound as science. Any book that started the working of Watts' own imagination naturally interested him, for he enjoyed greatly living in his imagination. As a rule, in those days we talked much more than we read. The reading was the text; the sermon was all our own. The playgrounds we found for our minds were inspiringly comprehensive. Whether our knowledge was sound or unsound on all the subjects we scampered over was immaterial; there was enough keen interest, enough keen vitality aroused by our ideas clashing together to strike some original matter out of most subjects.

Owing to his living so much alone in his studio, and the actual labour of painting absorbing so many hours of the

day, Watts had hitherto remained somewhat dumb on the purely intellectual side of his nature apart from his art. Thoughts would come to him weighted with imagination, with a mystic indefinite feeling of poetic truth, and they would fly away again before he had embodied them in any expression. He often said he felt the want of a work-a-day intellect and *time* (he was always longing for more *time*) to make use of them. The larger forces of his genius lifted him away from the area where the detail of thinking is worked out by ordinary minds—even in painting he always maintained that he lacked the facility most artists possess. This was partly owing, I believe, to the fact that his ordinary working intelligence, of which he had really more than his share as compared with most people, was often stunned by the excitement of origination. He would feel that underneath the positive light of inspiration was chaos—a link seemed to be wanting which should have connected and placed in order the steps of the ladder which led to the highest. Like the inevitable forces in nature, certain impressions would work on his imagination and inspire creations in art; but these could no more be exhaustively explained by stating the impression that started the idea, than the beauty of a lily can be explained by saying that it was planted in leaf-mould by the gardener who reared it, however necessary for its growth the leaf-mould may have been. Sympathy was the leaf-mould for many of Watts' ideas; I think that by talking his ideas out to me in definite language he would clench thoughts that were vaguely floating in his brain, and reduce them to the state that enabled him to make use of them. He was possessed by feelings he could not reason out by himself, but, when with those in sympathy with them, he developed the power of disentangling the web. More and more he delighted in talking

as more and more his latent power of conversing increased. Still he would constantly say (I have also dozens of letters in which the same excessive modesty is expressed) that he did not know what people meant by treating him as a person with any intellect. "I feel I am a goose—more stupid than any one I ever met."

He wrote—"I always wondered how I could so much take the place of Walter Bagehot in your estimation, feeling, as I do, the immense difference, alas! between us." I had told him that he had done something for me in filling the terrible gap which my brother-in-law's death made in our lives. I and my sisters had been singularly fortunate in having from our earliest childhood the advantage of hearing first-rate conversation. My father when still young went into Parliament, and became almost at once a member of the Liberal Government, occupying different posts, when the Liberals were in, till the time of his death. Every public interest he tried to share with us even when we were quite small children. I remember well how delightfully he would talk to us about politics when we rode out with him on our ponies, or when he took us for long Sunday walks, or when we went "down to dessert." Many of the most interesting public men of the day would come on visits for the week-ends when we were in the country. Mr. W. R. Greg, who afterwards married my sister, almost lived with us during many years. He, like Watts, was possessed of a charming "atmosphere," and conversed most delightfully. Curiously enough we always called him "Signor" (also Watts' name among his intimates). Besides talking charmingly, Mr. Greg had a singular facility in transmitting other people's ideas, as well as his own, into writing.[1] Then

[1] Walter Bagehot told my husband, who had never met my father, that to hear him (my father) discourse with W. R. Greg on public questions, and the

when I was still in the schoolroom Walter Bagehot came into the family as my eldest sister's husband, and his great friend, Mr. R. H. Hutton of *The Spectator*, was a constant visitor, and became very intimate with our family. Augustine Birrell ended a lecture he gave on Walter Bagehot at Leighton House (reprinted in his "Miscellanies") with the words, "To know Walter Bagehot through his books is one of the good things of life." (Mr. Birrell never met him.) If one of the good things in life was to know Walter Bagehot through his books, a still better thing was to know him intimately as a friend and a relation. When my father died he took the position of the head of the family, and he and my sister lived with us. Our friend, Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff quoted in his published "Notes from a Diary" a letter from my sister, Mrs. Greg, relating to Walter Bagehot and his Somerset home. She writes, August 21, 1887: "I am so glad you have been to Langport. It is to me one of the most interesting places I ever go to for its associations with Walter Bagehot. However much Herd's Hill may be altered and embellished, I never forget for a day that it was there that he lived so great a part of his life and died. No one with whom I have lived in close contact has ever produced upon me so much the impression of genius as he did. He never needed to be told anything. There was something Shakespearean in the way in which he instinctively knew what was going on in the minds of all sorts of men, and he brought to bear upon this knowledge a judgment at once so firm and so clear that one felt irresistibly impelled to take his conclusions as final when

subsequent articles written thereon by Mr. Greg, made a most perfect combination, quite the best he had ever come across. My father was noted for a gift of expounding his ideas with a singularly lucid and weighty power. Mr. Greg's original writings, as is well known, were chiefly on ethical subjects, his best known books being "The Creed of Christendom" and the "Enigmas of Life."

he came to definite conclusions. When he did not—and his wisdom often held him back from doing so—he equally satisfied one's mind: it had been enriched, stirred with living thought, delighted by the touch of true humour. One's horizon had been widened; one breathed more freely; one lived more happily. And ten years ago all this went from us in its prime. When burning the brightest,—the light suddenly went out, and I have never ceased to feel that things have been darker ever since. It is one of those losses to which one cannot reconcile oneself. Every year his works seem to be more read and more valued."

When still a child I stayed with Madame Mohl in Paris where she had a salon in the Quartier St. Germain, the last of the best kind of salon.[1] Here I would sit with Madame Mohl and her niece in a corner ottoman in her drawing-room, and listen with delight to the conversation of M. Mohl and the *élite* of French savants. I remember the effect it produced on me even as a child. It was, as I recall it, the perfection of the art of talking. From earliest childhood therefore I and my sisters heard talk of the best. When my husband and I became the friends of Leighton and Watts we had also the benefit of delightful conversation, and for the most part on the subject which had for me the most vivid interest—art.

[1] 120 Rue du Bac was a centre for interesting people of all nationalities, but the generation that knew it best has almost passed away—though to a few who, like myself, knew it when a child, it recalls delightful memories which will remain vividly interesting to the end. It carried out, though on French lines, which included an excellent cuisine, our English principle of "plain living and high thinking." When Madame Mohl was eighty-eight years old she paid us a visit of three weeks to Melbury House. Even Leighton threw down the barriers of his fixed laws in order to receive her during his working hours. I remember well the little scene that took place when she entered his studio: he gallantly fell on one knee and kissed her hand. The little old lady, much pleased, exclaimed, "Ah! ce joli petit Leighton, de la Rue Blanche!"

A literary acquaintance of mine suggested to me that I should take notes of our conversations, which might result eventually in a work similar to that of the "Conversations with Goethe" by Eckermann. I told Watts of this suggestion, and it caused us both much amusement. Any one knowing either Watts' temperament or my own would have been equally amused. The whole delight and inspiring value of these talks lay so completely in their spontaneity,—in the fact that thought and word sprang out as an impulse of the moment, and from the mood of our minds at that moment. To have waited to take notes would have indeed spoilt the whole evening's play. The nearest record of these conversations exists in Watts' own handwriting on those little scraps of paper he used to give me after he began to write down his thoughts, but even these do not fully convey the charm of his delightful talk, nor of the sense of humour which he had, and which he generally directed against himself. The working of his mind became so brilliant, so elastic, so subtle,—his spirits so buoyant as they flowed with vibrating eagerness, like a child's, full to overflowing with interest about the thing he was talking about. We never talked of anything disagreeable, and hardly ever about people. A mutual friend once said, "There is something about Watts which would make it impossible for any one to say a coarse thing in his presence." I had, however, once the misfortune to hear a person speak in a coarse manner, aggravated by familiarity, in Watts' presence. The effect was so unpleasantly distressing, the incongruity so great, that I would have foregone the pleasure (and it was a *great* pleasure) of Watts' society at any time rather than have been exposed to receiving again such a disagreeable impression. It was like saying a coarse *double entendre* to a sensitive child. It required, as our mutual friend

remarked, a degree of abnormal bluntness and want of sensitiveness to have perpetrated such a crime. "All things bright and beautiful" were those most eminently suited to Watts' real and most happy self. In the carrying out of his work lay the truest and best help he thought he could give to a sorrowing world. He felt that his vocation was to try to teach persuasively the minds of his fellow men and women through noble beauty and symbolism in art to dwell on elevating themes; to acquire strength for the daily toil and weary labour apportioned to so many of us in this world through looking upward and abroad to larger interests and ideas than those that close in and surround the necessities and experiences of merely personal concerns. To maintain strength for his own labour was clearly Watts' first duty, and to help him to do so that of any who were his real friends.

Watts would often say that he had been born too early in the century. Later on vitality in art began to kindle with real fervour; the pre-Raphaelite school arose, and such painters as Holman Hunt, Rossetti, Madox Brown, and Burne-Jones had found a very different and more encouraging atmosphere in which to develope their genius than that in which Watts found himself in the day when he began to work. Then, he said, every portrait had for its background a pillar and a curtain, and no connection whatever existed between the intellect and the art of the country! He admired Etty greatly as a painter, and regretted that he was so much ignored by the younger men. Haydon interested him much, and he felt in sympathy with him in many ways. Haydon lacked the technical ingenuity and individual invention in the actual skill of painting which Watts acquired through cleverness in guiding his ideas into pictorial expression. Watts was more patient and less

mad, but he had learnt much from Haydon, and frequently discussed his character and work. The fact alone that it was Haydon who demolished the judgment of the fashionable critic, Knight, who asserted with the positiveness of a fashionable critic that the Elgin Marbles belonged to debased schools of Roman sculpture, and that Haydon had brought the matchless frieze and fragments of the Parthenon Pediment to the notice of all true art lovers, was sufficient to secure for him Watts' profound gratitude.

With no one so much as with Watts have I realised the profound truth of "ennuyer c'est tout dire!" He would not be bored. He could at times stand vulgarity and rampant Bohemianism if combined with vitality and amusing audacity, but bored he would not be. The only time I ever saw him lose his good manners was when I afflicted him with a visit from an acquaintance who had been lunching with me and asked to be taken to Watts' studio. She was handsome and in the gay world, and I took her in. But she talked in a manner which bored Watts, so presently, rubbing his hand over his forehead, without further warning, he said, "It is hot here! I shall go for a walk, and promptly went out, leaving us in possession of his studio.

I had so often heard Watts express the intention of giving the best of his life's work to his nation, that it came as a surprise to hear one day from an acquaintance who was calling on me that he would, in all probability, leave all his pictures to a person in whom he was greatly interested. This led me to suggest to Watts in the summer of 1878 that he should give those pictures he intended to be public possessions during his lifetime. He fell in with the idea, and decided to take the necessary steps to present at once certain of his works to the nation. He spoke to a friend of his, a peer, who mentioned it, I believe, in the House of Lords.

A difficulty arose, which I think could only arise in England, namely, there appeared to be no "nation" to give the pictures to! The Tate Gallery was not then in existence, the National Gallery only received the works of deceased artists. The South Kensington Museum hardly met Watts' views as a suitable permanent home for such works as he wished to give. At last a temporary solution of the difficulty was met by certain pictures being lent to the South Kensington Museum. Eventually, as is well known, the imaginative symbolic works found a suitable place in the Tate Gallery, and the portraits in the National Portrait Gallery.[1]

In the winter of 1878, when in the country, I was seized with a desire to write an article. I wrote it, and called it, "Is a Great School of Art Possible in the Present Day?" It was my first piece of serious writing, and it was to appear in the *Nineteenth Century*. On returning to London I read it to Watts from the printed proof. He had not known I was writing, and was much surprised, even excited, expressing

[1] Before this took place, however, a curious little incident occurred. Sir William Gregory, a friend of ours, called in the summer of 1888 to ask me to arrange the following matter with Watts. If he had not already left the pictures in his will to the National Gallery, would he add a codicil doing so before the following November? Sir William Gregory was one of the Directors of the National Gallery. The Council was constantly having to face a painful situation. The widows of artists would present their husbands' works to the Gallery, and space being very limited, it was difficult to accept them even if they were good. It was, however, very painful to refuse any such gifts at a time when the widows of the artists were particularly sensitive as to the value of their husbands' pictures. A rule, therefore, was being made that no works should be accepted till twelve years had elapsed after the painter's death. It was suggested, however, that some means should be invented in order to secure at his death the works which Watts intended to give to the nation. The new rule was, therefore, not to come into action for six months, during which time Watts was to be asked to add a codicil to his will, which I believe he did. The Tate Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery were subsequently built, and thereby all these difficulties were solved satisfactorily.

much delight. From that time Watts began to write himself. He would put down any idea that came into his mind on any little scrap of paper he could lay his hand on at the moment, often giving me them at the end of the day to read aloud to him. They were generally thoughts and ideas which had arisen out of conversations we had had on the previous evening, or from matters he had read in books or in the newspapers. Art, manners, dress, every kind of subject formed the text of these written thoughts. As I look through these little scraps of paper, each recording an idea and meaning worth storing in the memory, I feel that nothing recalls as these do the Watts of that day—the man, teacher, and friend—so vividly. Neither letters, nor touches I recollect seeing him put on his pictures, seem to be so much himself as do these little scribbles. They are more like his conversation than are his letters, which, though often profoundly interesting, flavour at times of essay writing. I suggested to Watts to gather together some of the scraps, and give the public the benefit of them in an article. The editor of the *Nineteenth Century* would certainly, I told him, be pleased to have anything from his pen. One morning, unexpectedly, a bundle of them came in. He had suddenly made up his mind to carry out this suggestion. With the bundle came a note asking me if, when I had nothing better to do, I would put the "wretched scribbles" together and make an article of them. "My vanity," he writes, "prompts me again to offer excuses, but I think of Marcus Aurelius and abstain.—SIGNOR." I found it very interesting to re-read the scraps—a lengthy process, however, to piece them together into an article. The sentences were all written with no reference one to the other, and many stopped short of an ending. However, I did my best, and at last a consecutive piece of writing was

(Matthew Arnold) "Poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man that in which he comes nearest be being able to utter the truth."

Quoting Voltaire, he says, "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy & depth than the English nation." | his own noble & profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness, to assert that Art is able to make such application distinctly, would be foolish, but the noblest Art can & does maintain the elevation poetry has lifted the mind into, & is therefore an agent of almost equal value, & it is merely the energy & depth Voltaire speaks of that it is so desirable to cultivate in the pursuit of Art, & expect it, & demand it when Art is spoken of seriously &

The bow with which I armed myself is too strong heavy for me & therefore the my arrow may be well directed they fall so too short of the mark. ~~That they~~ to be coin test, excepting by the few who take personal interest ~~& see~~ in what I do, what I would.

When we can dignify our bigotry by the name of religion, call our selfishness (avarice) prudence, our prodigality generosity our worldliness good sense there is nothing but habitual restraint of the law & opinion to prevent us from sinking into the lowest depths of infamy & crime, & so restrained our apparent respectability will not avail us much in the eye of supreme judgment

achieved. But the difficulty was not at an end. Correcting the proofs was a serious matter. Watts' mind was so active when once *en train* that every idea he had written started others. The additions he would have made were countless. "Pity for the printer!" I would exclaim. After several proofs and revises were discussed and corrected the last was sent off, and came out in the February number of the *Nineteenth Century*, 1880, under the title "The Present Conditions of Art." It was a pity that more of these pithful scraps were not published, as they embody the thoughts which came to Watts as events occurred, or as his own work suggested them day by day. Having ever the sense of pressure, and the dread of losing any moment of time and light when he could carry out his chief aim in life, his mind did not long retain any of those ideas which arose merely from passing events. One curious sign of Watts' mind being shut off and detached from all other interests while labouring at his art, and consequently vague as to the real origin of many of his ideas, was that I would often express a thought or idea on a subject, or reason out some question with him, and the very next day perhaps he would repeat the exact words I had used, in no way conscious that he was repeating, but thinking he was telling me something quite new and original. Another friend of his told me that she had noticed precisely the same curious lapse of memory when conversing with Watts. Something analogous to this has occurred respecting his designs. He has repeated more than once the main features of a design made by another, without, I fancy, being fully conscious of having done so. The most obvious case of this was when he painted a picture, the design of which was in all essentials the same as that of a little sketch I had given him, painted by a Frenchman on the panel of a cigar-box. For many

years he kept it always on the mantel-shelf in his sitting-room. Later it was moved; but probably the design had stamped itself somewhere in his brain, and when he was painting his picture he repeated it without precisely knowing where it came from. He took great interest in the working of his own mind,[1] and would become so much engrossed in the idea which stimulated the painting of his subjects, that the design probably became a minor consideration. He was after something beyond the simple pictorial quality in the work. He would say, "As regards ideas and intentions I cede to none, but further than that I can't claim any advantage—every one seems to me to do better work than I can." His distaste for working from models was great as a rule. They could help him but little in the chief aims of his work, and their presence in his studio disturbed the solitude which conduced, he thought, to the best developement of his ideas. At one time he took the bell off his studio door during working hours, so that it was impossible that he should be disturbed. Solitude may have been necessary to Watts, but his not working more from models had its drawbacks. The direct study from nature must always enrich the soil in which intentions in art pure and simple are grown. Watts, from his dislike of having models—the mere arranging for them to come fussed him greatly—fell back perhaps too exclusively on his knowledge. It was certainly as easy for Watts to make an original design as to adapt one made by another; it was probably so easy that he evidently thought it of small importance which of the two he did, the point of true interest to him being to transmit through the language

[1] Walter Bagehot would say, "If you have a mind to play with, it's so much the best game, you need have no other." Certainly Watts had plenty of that game at his command.

"GREECE IN THE LAP OF EGYPT"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

of art his own ideas and feelings. When with me, however, he most persistently denied his right as an artist to claim any "originality." He would talk very interestingly on the subject of originality. "There is no such thing, really, as originality," he would maintain. "How can the human mind conceive anything absolutely new! The ideas of Heaven and Hell, and of all things conceived by the human imagination and not actually seen, are nevertheless based on human experience. To create what is called original art, is merely the power to seize, remember, and combine such experiences, and to put them into a form, stamping them doubtless with strong personal preferences and feelings; but the form such art takes cannot be really new, it must always be a reflection and combination of something that has been seen or felt or heard. The combination may be a new one, but the ingredients are old." He would say that the history of the world's art was like a chain, each link depending on the previous links for its place in the onward progress. Greece, even, though she rose to such unparalleled heights in the developement of the sense of beauty, grew out of Egypt. It was this particular "link," which Watts illustrated in one of his wall paintings,[1] which recalls so distinctly the design of the group of "The Fates" from the Parthenon pediment, where the reclining figure of Greece is leaning against the other representing Egypt. Had Watts had a more retentive memory for other matters besides his art, he might, I am convinced, have written that which would have been of value on many subjects. His memory, he thought, had been injured by the terrible headaches which had been his scourge for so many years. In many letters he regretted his inability to put in writing things he was burning to say.

[1] See illustration.

When the impetus of excitement was created by any subject that touched him very poignantly, Watts could write with extraordinary point and vigour, but as soon as the moment passed he relaxed into more or less vagueness of thought, only holding the principle of the matter firmly and permanently—in other words, his thoughts again completely centred themselves in his own work. The "wretched scribbles," as he called them, are so valuable on account of their being the spontaneous expression caught in writing when his thought was vividly alive to any interesting subject. One day he gave me a short poem he had written. His Blanche had married, and was about to become a mother, and the lines question what news the wind would bring with it.

He took the kindest interest in everything I wrote, always inciting me to write more. My article on Millais, "Why is Millais our Popular Painter?"[1] appeared a year or two after the *Nineteenth Century* article in the *Fortnightly Review*, Mr. John Morley being then the editor. Watts was not well, and obliged to keep his room. He writes, on reading the proofs: "I think your article quite excellent, and can criticise nothing, unless that it might appear to some you unduly depreciate Millais; still, you are no doubt right in the direction of your remarks, and Millais can certainly afford the expense. Hang the pen! This seems to me to be quite one of the best things you have written. I hope it will be put in without change."

Another article of mine[2] appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* somewhat later, "The Painted Poetry of Watts and Rossetti," which he also said he liked.

In 1895 I was asked to republish the several articles I had written in the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Fortnightly*, *Spectator*, and other periodicals. They appeared under the title of "A Retrospect," in 1896, the name of a fresh article

[1] Reprinted in "A Retrospect." [2] Ibid.

* Proportion, smallness of head, a great beauty, ...

It may be found that in our present conditions that intellectual & physical growth cannot proceed simultaneously but that one must be at the expense of the other, yet if the general conditions were modified as possibly they might be, the balance might still be retained but the starting point shifted, the same relations but a different average, an average physically nobler & grander until the ordinary European of the present might be to that possible average that the Hottentot is to him, But be that as it may we might well be contented with the splendidly balanced proportions & perfectly regular outline bequeathed to us by the great Greek Sculptors. That such proportions & such outlines are very possible are proved by many modern approximations

The northern race is superior in size & under a fortunate concurrence of conditions, & application of knowledge might produce a development of stature unknown & hardly dreamt of even by the Greek Sculptors, The number of splendidly grown & proportioned girls commonly met with in & about the streets of London is very striking, but the apparent natural effort in towards a grand development of the form is kept in check by restricting habits. The Social tendencies work in one direction, & the natural physical tendencies in another,

The survival of the fittest is more an accepted doctrine, but

which formed a preface to the previous writings. Watts writes he shall read the book, "Retrospect," "with intense interest; a great and beautiful subject." Having read it, he writes: "Your 'Retrospect' is excellent! Perhaps you might have said something more about that sincere, earnest, and intellectual worker, Holman Hunt."

It was chiefly during the winter months that the reading and discussions on the writing took place. In the summer, when we went in about six o'clock, we used to find Watts still painting in the large studio, still walking backwards and forwards between his easel and the large looking-glass which doubled the length of his space for him between the glass and the canvass. This looking at his work from as great a distance as possible, was a manner of working which Sir Joshua Reynolds pursued, and that Watts found greatly helped him in obtaining the quality he viewed as all-important—breadth. In these summer evenings I would watch him put on touches which I did not always quite follow; but gradually the form would consolidate, as it were, under the seemingly vague indefinite strokes, and the modelling giving the fine form, truly Pheidian in character, would emerge. I remember being particularly struck by this while he was painting on the figures in "Love and Life." I realised then the immense amount of knowledge he must have had, the expression of which lay under that bloom of atmosphere, a quality in his work without which Watts would never rest content. If his painting had a hint of tightness, or was too defined to allow of the sense of atmosphere, he would, as soon as it was dry, scumble a film of white paint over it; when that again was dry, he retouched it with colour. He advised me to do the same, but knowing it produces rather a shock after nearly finishing a painting, to see it very nearly obliterated, he would

break it to me gently. He would say, "If it were mine, I think I would scumble it over with white. Have you the courage?" The copy I made of his portrait of Mrs. Langtry remains to this day with its obliterating scumble of white over it! It was some time in the year 1879 that Leighton lent us his volume of Boschini in which is described Titian's method of painting. I translated it to quote in the article I wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* entitled, "Why is Millais our Popular Painter?" I used it also, with Watts' approval, to describe his method in the catalogue of the American Exhibition. I read it to Watts in 1879, and from that time he definitely adopted Titian's method, finding that by its means he could work on a canvass for years and yet retain the same quality of clean fervour and freshness in the colour which you get in a first sketch. The first picture which he painted after reading this account of Titian's method was his own portrait, now in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence. I watched him working on this. He used two looking-glasses to get the profile of his face. The attitude of the head is, in consequence, I think, somewhat strained. The following is the translation from Boschini of Titian's method:—

"In truth, Titian is the best of those who have painted. Giacomo Palma the Young (so named to distinguish him from Giacomo Palma *il Vecchio*) told me he had had the good fortune to enjoy the wise precepts of Titian. That he (Titian) smothered his canvasses with a mass of colour that made, so to speak, a bed or base for the touches which he painted over it. And I also have seen him—with resolute strokes and brushes full of colour, filling the same brush sometimes with light red to serve as a half-tint, sometimes with white, rose, black, or yellow—produce, with his amount of knowledge, in four dashes of the brush, the promise of a rare figure. In all cases such sketches of his

were admired by many who travelled from far to see the best manner in which to enter into the *Pelago della Pittura.* After having made these precious foundations for his pictures he turned the canvasses to the wall, and there he left them some months without looking at them. When he wished to paint on them again he first examined them with a very critical observation, as if they were his worst enemies, to see what defects he could find in them, and if he found anything which was discordant with the delicacy of the intention of his art, as a beneficent surgeon operates on the infirm, he applied himself to reduce any swelling or superabundance of flesh, or to putting right an arm if the form of the bony structure was not properly adjusted, or putting in its place a foot that had taken a discordant posture, and so on, without pity for its pain. Working in this way he constructed the figure, and reduced it to the most perfect symmetry that could represent the beauty of nature and of art. Having done this, he turned his hand to other work until the first was dry, and repeated the same process on other pictures. And so he worked from time to time on them till he covered his figures, as it were, with live flesh, perfecting with such wonderful touches that at last only the breath seemed wanting. He never did a figure at once (*alla prima*), and used to say that any one who improvised (*che chi canta all' improvviso*) could never make verses that were profound or really well put together. The essence of the finish, of the last touches, he put on from time to time with rubs of his fingers in the high lights approximating them (*avvicinandosi alle mezz-e tinte*), blending one tint with another, and again with a touch of the finger putting in a dark stroke in some angle to enforce it, or a touch of rose, like a drop of blood that seems to give life to the surface, the touches creeping on gradually, and so perfecting his animated figures. And

Palma attested the fact that in finishing he painted more with the finger than with the brush."

I would try to interest Watts in the models who sat for me, and he would often express a desire to paint from them, but he could never make use of a model for at most more than a few hours together, and many of the best models could only be engaged for the whole day. In the case of Dorothy Dene, the model for "Uldra," "The rain it raineth every day," and others who sat to me, I arranged to take the morning hours, and after luncheon send the model in to Watts. We often discussed the particular character of form and the colour in these models during the evening whilst they were fresh in our memories. Perhaps I should have never so fully realised Watts' instinctive power of seizing subtle character in form and texture had I not struggled to paint from the same model on the same day as he had. In the case of Dorothy Dene, I had worked from her some time before Watts painted from her. Her colour was very exceptional, and I had in vain tried to suggest it truly. A clouded pallor, with a hint somewhere of a lovely shell-like pink, but such a mere hint, it was difficult to localise it in the very even smooth texture of the surface. It seemed under the skin, as colour lies under the smooth surface of the inside of a shell. Leighton, who worked so much from this model, and who in the first place had asked me to give her sittings, knew well that he never succeeded in getting this particular texture and colour. He got much else from Dorothy Dene in the way of dramatic expression and gesture, and for these qualities he mainly worked from her, but, as far as likeness went, he always maintained that he had failed to satisfy himself. No other model had he found so tantalisingly difficult to paint from. Watts, in a couple of hours, produced a head of Dorothy

Dene which was, as a mere portrait of her, more like than any Leighton ever achieved. It was marvellous how, in the time, he reproduced in paint the extraordinarily subtle and exceptional texture and colour of her complexion.

He told me that, though he might develope a design, he never altered it. In his work his memory never failed him. He might leave a canvass untouched for years, but the intention and design of the picture, as first conceived, was never altered. He could always go back on it, and pick it up just where he left it. Also with a subject imagined and thought out but not put on canvass. Without any tangible record, it was ever there somewhere in his brain, ready to be begun. He might change the name of a picture, which in many cases he did, but the pictorial creation, he told me, ever remained as he had at first conceived it.

In 1880 he discussed with us the necessity of building a gallery to hold all the pictures, finished and unfinished, which were piled in his studio, one upon another. I most strongly advised him to do so. He could count on his five fingers, he said, the pictures, other than portraits, which he had sold, and even those were sold to personal friends for a nominal price. His strong conviction was that no wide public would ever care for his subject pictures, much less buy them; but he wished them to be seen properly by any who might, like ourselves, sympathise with his aims. Mr. George Aitcheson, R.A., undertook the building of the gallery, Mr. Cockerell, the architect who had built Watts' house, having died. Before it was commenced, however, a hitch occurred which made Watts nervous. He feared he might have to relinquish the idea. Mr. Barrington told him he thought he could arrange it for him, more especially as we were the only neighbours who could have had any occasion to object, as the gallery built out some of our air space; but

our desire that the public should be enabled to view Watts' pictures, naturally outweighed any personal considerations.

Canon and Mrs. Barnett being friends of ours, we were greatly interested in the first exhibition of pictures in Whitechapel, which took place in 1881. We talked of it to Watts, and he also entered into the scheme, lending us pictures for it and for the subsequent exhibitions which took place every spring; Leighton did the same. These exhibitions, and the opening of the gallery to the public, realised ideas which had hitherto lain somewhat latent in Watts' mind, but which were intimately connected with the most earnest aims in his own art. Where definite action was necessary—beyond the immediate concerns of his own studio—Watts required the aid of others. He had neither the time nor the power of transferring his thoughts easily into channels other than those directly pertaining to his art, necessary for acting by himself in such schemes as those we had at heart, such as the Whitechapel Exhibitions, but he gave the most sympathetic encouragement to such movements, and, so far as he could do so, helped us in every possible manner. Parties of teachers and poor people would come from Whitechapel and other places to be entertained by us in our garden, the object being to take them into Leighton's and Watts' studios, and by trying to awaken in their minds a real interest in art and beauty, inspire in our friends a sense of enjoyment in those things which aroused a great feeling of delight in ourselves. "What is worth having is worth sharing." Both artists keenly entered into the spirit of these entertainments. I have a clear vision now of a scene in the gallery when, after listening to songs and recitals from the guests, we ended by singing "Auld Lang Syne," Watts eagerly joining in and making part of the circle of joined hands. Never, I think, could a more

complete expression have been given to that particular vein of enlightened philanthropy which includes the foremost thought of the latter half of the nineteenth century, the earnest broad religious sympathies of Ruskin, Browning, Tennyson, Frederick Denison Maurice, and other deep thinkers in that line, than by these gatherings, instigated in the first instance by Canon and Mrs. Barnett, and carried out with the help of Leighton and Watts. When the function culminated by a closing scene in the gallery, Watts appeared more completely happy and contented than I have ever seen him. He was impressed by the feeling that his highest aims had found an harmonious response in real life, and an inner chord had been sounded in himself which had not hitherto been struck. There, crowded together, were a number of poor people, living habitually with nothing but the most squalid ugliness in their surroundings, looking with eager eyes at the visions of his creation, and listening most earnestly to the explanation of the ideas and meanings in them. The art which to many among the richer classes was but a source of æsthetic culture, gave to these visitors an inlet to a world of visionary beauty and noble thought which they might all inhabit, however poor and miserable they might be. They were offered food for their spirits, which was above mere culture and education; food which, like Christian teaching, established a common ground for all humanity to meet on.

The very best in art for all—that was the text of Leighton's and Watts' efforts. Watts once recounted to me how he had long suffered under a sense of injury, and that when walking along the street one day he was suddenly seized by a passionate desire to do something for humanity; a great sympathy with human suffering seemed to be awakened in him, and, with the longing to alleviate it, he became conscious that

the heavy load he had borne was lifted off, and that he was freed from the pain of all feeling of injury and resentment.[1]

Among the pictures in the gallery which looked down on these parties from Whitechapel, was the group of tragic subjects, "The Song of the Shirt," "Under a Dry Archway," "Found Drowned," the "Irish Peasants during the Famine," each telling its sad story with dramatic force. These embodied the real and deep sympathy Watts felt for human suffering, and conveyed to some of our humble visitors a direct meaning, touching many who did not understand his more symbolic expressions.

It was during those years of later middle life, when Watts was between fifty-five and seventy years old, that he virtually painted the most important works which he called his "Anthems," though the designs of these pictures had been previously conceived. In 1876, when I first saw them in his studio, "Time, Death, and Judgment," "Love and Death," "The Court of Death," "The Newly-Created Eve," "Eve Tempted," and "Eve Repentant," and "To All Churches," were but sketches in colour on the canvasses. The pictures which were finished when the gallery was ready to hold them, and which he never retouched, were "Echo," "The Dray Horses," "Ganymede," "The Prodigal," "Satan going to and fro on the Earth, seeking whom he may devour," "The Good Samaritan," "Esau," "Jacob and Esau," the beautiful portrait group of the Ladies Talbot, who afterwards become Lady Brownlow, Lady Lothian, and Lady Pembroke, Dr. Joachim, and many other portraits. Among those that were well advanced, but on which he afterwards worked more or less, were "Paolo and Francesca," "Orpheus and Eurydice," "Britomart," "The Carrara

[1] The song set to Longfellow's poem, "The Bridge," was a great favourite of Watts in those days.

Mountains," "Lady Godiva," "The Nurture of Jupiter" (virtually finished at that time, but afterwards named "The Childhood of Zeus," and exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1896, the Zeus being the portrait of the same Greek child who sat for the beautiful head of "Ganymede"), "Fata Morgana," "Mischief," "Ariadne," "Europa," "Chaos," "A Condottiere," and "The Rider on the White Horse," "Charity." The most important of Watts' pictures which were begun and finished between the years 1877 and 1886, and which I therefore saw in every stage of their execution, included "Psyche" (bought by the Chantrey Bequest from the Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition of Watts' works), "Love and Life," "The Idle Child of Fancy" (first named "Cupid"), "The Genius of Greek Poetry," "When Poverty comes in at the Door, Love flies out of the Window," "Thetis," "The Three Goddesses," "The First Oyster-eater," "Mammon," "A Reverie," "Brynhildr," "The Wife of Plutus," "Hope," "The Minotaur," "The Messenger of Death," and many portraits.

Titian's method of painting, described by Boschini, enabled Watts to elaborate and enrich the scheme of colour, also to add variety and effect to the texture in his work; but, as I have said before, though he worked for years on some of his pictures, all his designs remained absolutely the same as when first sketched on to the canvasses.

On summer evenings he would ask me to play to him on the pianoforte. He liked simple tunes, especially airs by Beethoven and Handel. The rays of the warm evening light would come in through the high studio window, striking down on the paintings. As golden shafts from the setting sun lighted on the canvasses placed on easels towards the light, how gloriously would the autumn-like tints burn out in fervent colour. With a passionate depth they glowed in harmony with the music of the masters. Watts was indeed

right in calling them his "Anthems." That so fragile a presence could contain in it the power to create such things! On most evenings, after I had played a little while, he would put down his palette and brushes and say, "Let us have a song. It is good for the health. It expands the chest." His favourites were Dibdin's "Tom Bowling," "The Banks of Allan Water," "The Vicar of Bray," "Sally in our Alley," "Tell me, my Heart," and many others of Bishop's songs. The elaborate cadenzas in these last he achieved with astonishing ease and precision considering his age and the fact that he had not practised for years.

Watts really loved music. I remember once finding him resting on his sofa in his little sitting-room after his midday meal, when he told me he had just been hearing in his head combinations of instruments—"orchestral effects." He went on to say he thought he ought to have been a musician instead of a painter. He heard melodies and harmonies without conscious thought, whereas only one picture had ever come to him as a vision. All the rest had been built up from ideas worked out in his brain. Thought led the way, and directed any artistic expression of which he was capable. The one exception had been, "Time, Death, and Judgment." That had come before his inner sight as a picture, and he had at once hastily seized his chalk and drawn the design in from his vision. Those people, he contended, who were meant by nature to be painters and designers, worked mostly from the pictures revealed to their inner sight. He mentioned the names of those he knew who had this gift, and cited Burne-Jones as one. He (Watts) had revelations in sound, and hence he argued that he ought to have been a musician rather than a painter. Mr. Barrington also remembers Watts discussing this subject with him, and Watts saying how strange it was that he

never saw a picture as a picture even while in process of painting. He could feel no interest whatever in the ordinary art of "picture-making." In a letter he wrote March 27, 1892, after saying how glad he was I was giving so much attention to music, he writes: "It is a source of never-ending regret to me that I did not make serious study of music." Again: "I am glad you are having so much music. For spiritual inspiration there is nothing like it." Many of the "scribbles" were on the subject of music.

The science of photography interested him greatly. He thought it wonderful, and was of opinion in those days that it ought to help artists considerably in seeing nature truly. I remember his showing me a photograph of a child he had seen in a shop window, and had bought *as a lesson.* "We can't do anything like that," I remember him saying, pointing to the beautiful arms of the child. They were as good, he said, as Pheidias, and better—so broad, so simple, and yet suggesting such beautiful structure beneath the bloom of the surface. Mr. Frederick Hollyer would photograph many of Watts' pictures in every stage. Watts gave me one of "Love and Death" in an early stage. He thought it gave the feeling of the design quite as much or more forcibly than the finished pictures. I have hung photographs of both together, and the longer I live with them, the more I prefer the unfinished version. Watts would work on the actual photographs, taken from the pictures at their various stages. He would say that suggestions struck him while doing so which helped him to complete the works. While at Brighton, away from his large canvasses, he would yet be able to advance them through this method of painting in Chinese white and Indian ink on the photographs. He would write asking me to look at the touched photographs which he sent up from Brighton to Mr. Hollyer before they were re-photographed.

Music having been to me necessary daily food since I was five years old, when I composed small pieces and made my elder sisters play the bass to my treble, it proved a great bond of union between Watts and myself.[1] Though we had always loved Beethoven, Mozart, and Handel, we were no purists. We confided to one another that often if we passed a street band that was playing—always provided that it was playing in tune,—there we did draw the line,—that we would walk up and down the pavement to the sound of it. A Pole named Borschitsky, a clever violinist who had taught my boy, and was the happy possessor of a lovely instrument, an Amati, used frequently to play duets with me. When we played in the daytime Watts would come in to listen, but when in the evening he used to beg me to have the playing, if possible, in his studio. He had adopted a very charming little girl called Blanche, who is immortalised on many of his canvasses. Though she did not, as a rule, live with him, as he dreaded her feeling the life at Little Holland House too dull and monotonous, she would come often to stay with him during the first years when we were neighbours. She and I became great friends. Watts had wished her to learn the violin, and would advise me to do the same. He himself took lessons in order to encourage her. I often would play the accompaniments on the piano, and Blanche would always be a listener when I played with Borschitsky. During the time while a change of houses was going on, two of her cousins also appeared. I see the charming scenes in the studio still

[1] When kept by illness at Brighton, in 1882, he writes: "You may imagine what it is for me to lose Leighton's music," referring to one of those delightful concerts to which Leighton would ask his musical friends every spring, when the pictures, the year's work, were finished for the Academy. Never was Joachim's genius enjoyed more enthusiastically than when he played for his dear friend to their circle of mutual friends.

quite vividly, though it is so many years ago that they happened, when it seemed to be turned into a schoolroom, Watts in the position of head pupil. He was particularly delightful when with children. He became like a child himself. The picture of his Blanche I see now, perched on a high chair, like a bright-plumaged bird in gay-coloured cotton pinafores, picturesquely made. She had long limbs that moved with languid grace, a small head—a beauty Watts admired greatly—a sweet little round face, and twinkling, quizzing, dark eyes. She reigned over her "Signor" with a commanding affection. He was devoted to her. The younger cousins were very lively, very amusing, and all three dared anything and everything with Watts. I think he liked being bullied by them, and never resented anything they said. I remember Blanche bursting out with, "You *are* vain, Signor; you *know* you are!" "I daresay I am," Watts answered, quite composed under the accusation.[1] He tried very hard to train them to look on their lessons seriously, but he had not a chance. They were so bold and so amusing, he could not remain consistent. Appeals to me were made to back them up in proving that Signor was inconsistent. I, of course, did nothing of the kind, but maintained that whatever Signor said or whatever he did must be right. One child became so uproarious that the authorities threatened to send her to a day-school. "The idea," they said, "of screaming like that and making such a noise before a nervous man like Signor!" It was my belief that the lawlessness did the "nervous man" a great deal of good. To amuse Watts and make him laugh was his best medicine.

A house was taken at Brighton, and then the reign of

[1] Watts was conscious that vanity was one of his failings, and would often discourse on his desire to rise above it.

noisy nonsense, turmoil, and happy tyranny ceased, the studio returning to its normal peaceful state, with occasional visits from Blanche. Anything less like the real Watts of those days than the impressions given by many accounts written of him, can hardly be conceived. The stilted figure-head for the High Art bark which these suggest, is as unlike the very human, in many ways childlike Watts we remember, as any suggestion could be. When first meeting him, the charm of his personality and a kind of Celtic mystery in the nature, a want of anything which appeared definitely clenched in his relationship with his friends, backed by the sense of his genius, would produce an almost mesmeric effect on some ; intimate friendship once established, however, he aroused a very human, natural, and confiding affection in those who knew him best. Though of so very unique a nature,—a distinct entity, and holding so high a position as an artist, as a human being he was nevertheless pathetic. The frailty of his physique must have appealed, I think, to the motherly instincts in any woman friend. He would sum himself up by saying, "I have a good nature, but I am irritable." I must, however, affirm that during the thousands of hours Mr. Barrington and I spent with him, neither of us for one single moment ever saw him irritable. I saw him once, only once, in a passion with a servant.[1] He told me he had asked pardon of the servant, and expressed deep penitence to me for his loss of self-control when I saw him in

[1] I was working in the iron studio one morning on a mask for the head of the statue "Aurora," which Watts had asked me to do for him. He was impatiently awaiting a sheet of brown paper he had sent his servant to fetch, on which he wanted to draw a design. He came in and out of the iron studio, troubled that he should be losing time. When the servant appeared, Watts saw his sheet of brown paper tightly folded up in a small packet. He burst out in fury, and threw the little parcel back at the servant. I, hating scenes, flew down the pathway to our little gate, escaping through it to our own garden.

"HUMANITY IN THE LAP OF EARTH"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

the evening of the same day. Mr. Barrington, on another occasion, saw him lose control of his nerves with a workman who brought an accusation against one of Watts' servants. This incident proved to us the wisdom of his keeping his life as unruffled and unagitating as he could, for it was clearly necessary for him not to subject himself to any over excitement.

PRESENTS FROM WATTS

In 1878 Watts gave us some splendid possessions. Since the time he first inhabited his new house, a large number of wooden cases were stored in his sculptor's studio, the iron house, and a few even were standing about in his garden. They contained the paintings which had decorated the walls of the old Little Holland House. Having been painted on the plaster of the actual walls, Watts thought that when the house was doomed they would perish with it. A very gifted and ingenious artist friend suggested a means of preserving the paintings. The surfaces were pasted over with thick brown paper before the walls were touched. The workmen then hacked the plaster away to within an inch or two behind the painting, and cutting out each design from the walls, packed them in wooden crates. These, numbering twenty or more, were in the cases lying about in his studios and garden—very much, he said, in his way. He wished to give them to us. He made very light of this precious offering, laying great stress on the obstruction the cases made where they were. He had no time to see the paintings being rescued from the cases. I told him how happy I should be to superintend the operation, and that our factotum should do it for him. No, he said, he did not want them; he had no place in his house to put them, and he wished us to possess them. We were, of course, most

grateful to Watts for wishing to give us these treasures, and being assured over and over again by him that he could not possibly take steps towards preserving the works, and that "knocking about" as they did when constantly moved out of the way of the work going on at that time they would certainly before long become entirely destroyed, we accepted the precious gift. Our factotum arrived, Mr. Alfred Allgar from Wandsworth, and the interesting process began. When removed from the cases, before touching the brown paper pasted over the surface, tow and plaster soaked in size, the material Watts was using for modelling the equestrian statue of "Hugh Lupus," "Physical Energy," and the "Aurora," was squeezed tightly into the loose rubble—the remains of the wall left behind the pictures. This preparation was allowed to harden and become part of the previous ground. Then the exciting process began of washing off the brown paper and gradually seeing the designs emerge. One of these was a genuine "al fresco" work—a study of one of the figures in "Chaos"; the others were painted thinly with oil colour mixed with turpentine, on the dry surfaces of the walls of the old Little Holland House.[1] The design of Greece lying in the Lap of Egypt obviously recalls "The Fates" from the Parthenon pediment. Both figures in this panel were taken from little pencil sketches[2] of Lady Somers, likewise "Poetry," "Science," and the figure Progress

[1] These wall paintings were executed very much in the same method as the splendid "Time and Oblivion," which must, I think, ever rank among Watts' very finest works—above this design are written the words from Ecclesiastes, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest!" That favourite text of Watts' embodies the impelling impulses of his most serious life. Unfortunately the surfaces of the walls on which he painted the works he gave us were not worthy of the beautiful paintings with which he decorated them.

[2] Watts showed me small note-books in which he had drawn, in most delicate pencil work, sketches of several of his friends.

"ASSYRIA AND HINDUSTAN"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

FIGURES SYMBOLICAL OF THE SPIRITS OF PROGRESS AND NON-PROGRESS

Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

in the design representing progress and non-progress; "Hindustan" from her sister, Mrs. Cameron; "The Assyrian Empire," from another sister, Mrs. Jackson; "Art," from Lady Dalrymple, also a sister; "Truth" in "Time Unveiling Truth," from Mrs. Vaughan, a niece of these ladies, and "Rome" from Lady Lilford.[1] The "Mongol Empire" was drawn also from a friend of Watts', not a model. The most beautiful of these wall paintings, one which I had framed separately, is, I think, "Humanity in the Lap of Earth," the child Humanity being one of the pieces of work which even Watts himself admired. That representing "The Assyrian Empire" is perhaps the most notable as a design.

Watts told me that he had painted these life-sized figures on the walls of a small room—the dining-room in the old Little Holland House—to exemplify a principle which he considered of importance in dealing with decoration, namely, that large designs on the walls give dignity and a sense of size to a small apartment instead of being inappropriate, which many consider them to be. He felt, on the contrary, that studding the walls of such a room with a number of small frames gave a sense of insignificance to it. In all matters of taste to which his attention was drawn, Watts formed very definite and very independent opinions. He told me that he had absolutely refused to ride in the Park with a young lady friend if she persisted in wearing the high hat which was then the fashion. He wrote many notes concerning dress. Of stays he had a horror, and I possess little pencil drawings showing how very high heels deformed the human foot into the shape of a hoof!

[1] Watts painted the head of this figure representing the Roman Empire from a very fine study in chalk he had made of Lady Lilford, *née* Emma Brandling, one of the beautiful sisters of the Northumberland family of that name.

Two designs named "Peace and War"[1] were also among the original designs Watts gave us. Besides these were several copies of Flaxman's designs for Dante's "Inferno" and "Paradiso," drawn in outline, and painted on the walls of the old house in flat colours. These I arranged mostly in my studio. Another present he gave me about the same time was a piece of ivory on which he had painted in miniature a group of heads. If I remember rightly, Watts told me these were the only miniatures he ever achieved. (See illustration.) Yet another was the finishing of a portrait of Mr. Barrington which I had begun. With great difficulty, for he detested sitting, I had at last induced my husband to let me begin a head from him. I had worked twice for half-an-hour or so when Watts, as was his custom most mornings, walked into my studio to see how I was getting on. He stood over the easel for a few minutes, and then asked me to give him my palette and brushes, as he would like to paint on it. He continued for more than half-an-hour, evidently pleased with the subject. When he got up I said, "Never do I touch that again, Signor." "Nonsense," he exclaimed, "you must finish it." "Not a touch of mine shall ever spoil those," I repeated. "Oh, that's absurd; but if you won't, I must finish it some day for you," he said. He wrote soon after asking me to fix a morning with Mr. Barrington, and he would come into my studio to finish the portrait. But to get Mr. Barrington to sit was an achievement abnormally difficult, and it was not till October 1887, six years after the portrait was begun, that it was finished. Watts was just starting for Malta, and wrote me a little note saying he thought the best birthday present he could make me (my birthday being St. Luke's Day, 18th of

[1] First placed in the hall of Melbury House, but subsequently removed to Leighton House.

MR. RUSSELL BARRINGTON

From Painting by G. F. Watts

October) was to finish Mr. Barrington's portrait. It represented three hours' work, Watts' hour and a half on it being the last, excepting a few touches I put on the background and coat when he had finished the head. He also often kindly expressed a wish to paint our boy, but there again to achieve a sitting was too great a difficulty. He intended to paint my mother, whom he admired greatly, and it was to have been done in the winter of 1885 and 1886, but she was too unwell to sit, and died in the May of 1886. Watts made a sketch in red and black chalk for me after death, that curiously brought out a likeness to some of my mother's family Watts had never seen. He also said he would like to paint a head of my brother-in-law, Orby Shipley, who had kindly given Watts a sitting for the hands in Cardinal Manning's portrait (there being a strong likeness between the Cardinal and my brother-in-law), but there again the difficulty was to obtain the compliance of the sitter!

THE GROSVENOR GALLERY AND AMERICAN EXHIBITIONS

The first one-man show of Watts' pictures was at the Grosvenor Gallery in the winter and spring of 1882. Sir Coutts Lindsay had made overtures to him during the previous autumn. Watts, in talking the matter over with me, seemed disinclined at first to agree to the suggestion. He had his own gallery in which his pictures could be seen, and he did not wish to give up any time to the arranging of such an exhibition. He was also ever prone to shrink from challenging public criticism, feeling most diffident with regard to his productions. He felt they were unlike the work that was easily understood and therefore most popular, and being the reverse of self-assertive, he dreaded his art exciting controversy and

comparisons. It was too intimately his own, too much a part of his inner secret being, for him not to shun exposing it to the jarring note which publicity invariably brings with it to very sensitive natures. However, Sir Coutts Lindsay and the secretaries pressed the matter, and Watts became gradually interested in the idea. We talked it over every evening, and began making lists of the pictures he wanted shown, and of their owners. I wrote to many of these for him, and most agreed to lend. Watts was very anxious that the beautiful painting on panel he had named "Choosing" should be exhibited. He would often say of pictures painted about the same time as "Choosing," "I could not do that now," and certainly the perfect workmanship and the exquisite feeling of beauty in this picture puts it on the highest level of Watts' achievements; but unfortunately we could not obtain it for the exhibition. The owner at the private view told me she had never received any letter asking for it, as she was in Rome at the time it was written. This exhibition was my first introduction to a few of Watts' most beautiful works. Two of the four pictures of the Riders on the Horses from the Apocalypse were new to me; also "Life's Illusions," the unrivalled woman's portrait from a model which he called "Bianca," and others. This exhibition made a notable landmark in Watts' reputation. It silenced once and for all those who had maintained that his real gift as an artist was confined to portrait-painting, that his other efforts were but ambitious failures. How many arguments I had fruitlessly had with those who hitherto had held this view! Now his pictures themselves triumphantly succeeded in converting the general public to a truer estimate. Still a few old friends and acquaintances, besides others, remained constant to their *parti-pris*, though after the Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition

took place, it was, as a rule, only under the breath that they dared express such opinions. In the face of such works as "Life's Illusions," "The Dove that Returned in the Evening," "The Four Horses with their Riders from the Apocalypse," "Love and Death," the "Daphne," "Psyche," and many others that hung on the walls,—works instinct with original genius, belonging to no school, and having in their conception the thoughts of a finely imaginative quality, and a subtle, sensitive perception of ideas translated into a noble art, to maintain that Watts' only gift, or indeed his greatest gift, was but for portraiture, seemed to be a limited Philistinism easily demolished. *The Times* even spoke out with clenching decision on the subject. This delighted Watts. He wrote to me from Brighton, where he was staying during the early weeks when the exhibition first opened, that he had been most gratified by the fact that *The Times*' critic had entered with sympathy and intelligence into his aims and the direction he had wished to follow in his art. It was with reference to the selling of his pictures at the Grosvenor Exhibition that Watts asked Mr. Barrington's permission to refer would-be purchasers to him. The idea, I think, arose out of many conversations we had had respecting the sale of his pictures. From the earliest days of our acquaintance to the last winter before he died, Watts often confided to me, either in conversation or in letters, his anxieties regarding money, and his consequent desire to sell pictures. There is nothing perhaps more unaccountable than the place which money takes in the minds of different people. My experience leads me to think that the vagaries which Nature plays with regard to money in the minds of those possessed with genius are even greater than those she plays in the more commonplace mind. Watts' ideas were divided into two distinct

channels as regarded "the root of all evil." The one channel was directed by having from earliest youth to earn his own living (he told me he had had only one legacy left him, and that a very small one); also by principles which led him to the strictest economy and anxiety about money —namely, a horror of falling into debt, intense disapproval of extravagance, and a great desire not to have to think about money. These views directed his daily habits and personal expenditure. He never indulged himself in any purchase which was not necessary in the modest workman's life which he had chosen as that most truly dignified and consistent with his great aims.[1] He was alarmed at the idea of expenses being entailed on him, and, becoming often nervous, would at times exaggerate his economies with regard to personal expenditure. The other channel was directed by the habit of his dwelling on great abstract themes, his lofty imagination securing to him an inner life of thought which placed all material matters at a discount. When acting from the level of the higher considerations, money with Watts was absolutely disregarded, his aim being to secure sympathy with his own elevated trains of thought from a public whom they might benefit.

A friend who called on us one Sunday afternoon, just after Watts had given "Love and Death" to Manchester,

[1] When walking one day in High Street, Kensington, Watts had seen a print of Sir Thomas Lawrence's beautiful full-length portrait of Miss Farren (afterwards Lady Derby). He was enraptured by it, and told me how happy it would make him to possess it, but of course he must put aside all such desires, as he could not afford to buy anything that was not a necessity. How happy it made me to think that I knew such a very simple way to give him pleasure, letting alone the sense that we were so greatly his debtors with regard to the magnificent present of the wall paintings. I at once bought the print for him, and he thoroughly enjoyed the gift. We found a great charm in all transactions with Watts of the kind, he had so child-like a simplicity in his powers of enjoyment.

"THE ROMAN EMPIRE"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

told us that three thousand pounds had been offered Watts for the picture, but he had refused it. Our friend was immensely struck by his generosity. When I saw Watts later in the day, I told him of this friend's enthusiasm. "I don't find any difficulty in giving three thousand pounds; I should in giving five shillings," I remember he answered. He would discuss with me often the seeming anomalies in his nature, being as ever desirous of reaching in all matters a ground consistent with his loftiest desires, and yet wishing to be absolutely sincere with himself. This was often a difficulty owing to qualities in his nature which involved curious intricacies. That nothing can make people more easily misunderstood than shyness is obvious, and Watts was very shy, and consequently he not unfrequently found himself in a false position. Many statements have been made to the effect that he did not wish to sell his pictures, which led to the belief that he was free from the necessity of considering money. Watts himself, as far as my personal knowledge of him goes, was absolutely without any affectation with respect to his pecuniary position. He used to speak with entire frankness as to the necessity he had of selling some of his pictures, and we had often helped him, as far as it lay in our power, to do this. When I repeated to him any expressions of admiration I had heard for his work (I, on principle, always did this in order to try to counteract his depression concerning its want of popularity), he would say it was very nice to hear that any one sympathised with it, but that he thought that if people really cared for it they would buy it. I would tell him I thought that shyness was catching, and people felt as shy as he did about discussing prices with him. This idea seemed to sink in, for after the Grosvenor Gallery Exhibition opened, Watts wrote to me (January 8, 1882)—Mr. Barrington's defective

eyesight precluding Watts from carrying on any direct correspondence with Mr. Barrington—that he thought he must get some friend to whom purchasers might be referred, "some one of whom questions may be asked without the risk of *wounding my delicate susceptibilities!* Will Mr. Barrington undertake the office?" In the same letter, referring to paying a workman recommended by Canon Barnett, he wrote that he would willingly aid him, but he was only a working-man himself, and his bills are not less alarming than frequent. Even if he might venture to hope the G. G. (Grosvenor Gallery) would be a sort of success, and certainly he had had an amount of applause to which he was unaccustomed, he would make any bet buyers would be as shy as formerly. He felt he never could be a popular painter, and popularity alone was the thing buyers looked to —investments, in fact, while gratifying taste. He thought people felt that perhaps there is something in the works that should command a successful artist's price, though they would be unwilling to give it, and so did not like to ask him. Mr. Barrington was in Somerset when this letter arrived, so I wrote him the following, which I find among Watts' letters: "Mr. Watts writes to ask if you will be good enough to allow him to refer some people who want to buy some of the pictures at the Grosvenor to you, as he would far prefer the bargaining going through a friend. I am writing that you are away, but that I am sure you would not mind doing it when you come back. He suggests Holman Hunt as a knowing person to consult about prices. It is just what he wants, some man friend who will take the matter in hand." Watts had written later, saying he had a letter from Mr. Hallé saying that applications had been made to know the prices of the following pictures: "When Poverty Comes in, &c.," "Arion saved by

Dolphin,"[1] "Esau," "Creation of Eve," "Myth of Greek Poetry," "Carrara Mountains" ("Farm Buildings, Freshwater," "Evening at Freshwater," and "Landscape Study"). These within brackets Watts did not recognise. "I wonder whether Mr. Barrington would let me refer proposing buyers to him? and, further, whether he would take counsel with Holman Hunt, or some one in the habit of selling pictures, as to what would be a fair price to ask?" For the "Carrara Mountains" Watts wanted a thousand guineas, and thought that as Millais got three or four thousand for his landscapes, he didn't think the price unreasonable; the other landscapes, of course, would range at smaller prices. He thought the Greek poetry picture,[2] considering all things, for example that Alma-Tadema got three thousand for his "Sappho,' ought not to be less than one thousand or one thousand five hundred; he would sell it for eight hundred or nine hundred, reserving the copyright and power of repeating it; "Esau" he would sell for seven or eight hundred (always guineas). "Poverty" he does not know what to say about; he wanted to repeat it, and certainly would not sell the copyright. His letters show how entirely simple and straightforward we found Watts in money transactions regarding pictures, never for a moment affecting any position other than his own. In my personal contact with him, I always found Watts singularly alive to the vulgarity of any kind of pretension. For some reason, which has escaped my memory, we spoke to Burne-Jones, not to Holman Hunt, respecting the prices of his pictures. I recollect one piece of advice Burne-Jones

[1] It was the little baby figure hovering over the waves in the corner of this picture which I remember comparing to a wild rose-leaf in colour when looking at the picture with Watts, which he later on copied and enlarged, calling it "Good Luck to your Fishing."

[2] Wordsworth's lines beginning "The world is too much with us," had suggested this picture to Watts.

gave us. He said "You must never let Watts alter his price. Whatever price he asks for a picture that he must stick to."

Watts would often repeat with reference to any praise his personal friends gave to his work, "Ah! defend me from my friends! As sure as the scales go up with exaggerated expressions of admiration on one side, so certainly will they go down the lower when the exaggeration is found out!"[1]

Leighton met me at the Grosvenor Gallery, and we went through the exhibition carefully together. Knowing that Watts wished transactions for purchasing his pictures to be referred to Mr. Barrington, he asked me to ascertain the price of "Psyche," as he wanted to suggest to the Council of the Royal Academy that it should be bought for the Chantrey Bequest.[2] In answering my letter on the subject, Watts shows that eager interest in Leighton's approval of his work which he always expressed. "Do you think Leighton was really pleased?" he asks. The assertion, made not infrequently, that Watts was indifferent to the published criticisms on his work in papers and magazines is incorrect. Letters I have, and my recollection of conver sations, prove conclusively the contrary. With regard to this exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery he collected all the newspapers and magazines which contained criticisms on it, and these formed a great part of our reading in the evenings at that time. This is one of the cases when certain people endeavoured to put Watts on to stilts, which I do not think he ever wished himself to mount. It would have been indeed unnatural if one whose daily labour from sunrise to

[1] Another wise saying Watts was never tired of repeating was, that the faults which people find in others they may invariably trace as belonging to their own natures.

[2] Leighton's endeavours were successful, and the picture is now in the Tate Gallery.

sunset was the producing of art, should have felt no interest in learning how far his aims and achievements had found an understanding echo and sympathy in the public mind. Watts was too much in sympathy with that public mind (however misguided he might at times feel it to be), he cared too much for his own generation, he desired too earnestly to guide it from materialism to noble thought and action, to be indifferent to the judgment of the public. Criticism never permanently influenced his aims or methods; but that he was depressed by adverse, and pleased by favourable criticisms, was certainly the case. He wrote much that was interesting on the subject. It astounded him to read with what confidence writers could, with a sledge-hammer peremptoriness, clench a decision on processes and methods which took the greatest craftsmen in art years to master. The actual grammar—to say nothing of further experiences in training as an artist—was too difficult to learn without special training and giving up the best of life's energies to its acquisition. How, then, he used to ask, can those, without having directed their studies to such special training, decide points on technical matters on which great artists themselves would feel a diffidence in giving judgment? Let writers, by all means, express opinions on the points in a picture or statue which touch a general ground of culture open to all who can discriminate between what suggests the noble or the debased, what is superficially or earnestly felt, what is genuine or affected in idea and sentiment; but to write, as some did, with no hint of diffidence as to their power and right to decide what was correct or incorrect in the drawing or proportions of figures in a picture, the possible form action in human or animal's limbs can take under certain conditions, and other such points, astounded him beyond measure. With one sweep of their pen they

pronounced unqualified judgment on the work on which an artist had conscientiously laboured for months,—even years. The incessant manual labour involved in the creation of great art is obviously seldom recognised by those who are only writers. They see works when completed; they cannot put themselves into the processes which effect completion. It is a world to itself—that creating of art. Ruskin, being a great craftsman, knew the secrets of the trick, and could write from that further point of experience. He knew that the occupation of a painter of great pictures, inasmuch as it sets to work simultaneously the head, the heart, and the hand—ideality, affections, and physical energy are all required in their creation. The æsthetic perceptions of the writer who uses only his brain and taste does not reach the inner chamber. The *vraie vérité* of the thing which is a creation,—the special technique as certainly as the thought in the work, separate from all mere imitation or expected performance,—was not completely sounded, it was only skimmed over. Never was the technique of an artist less fitted to be judged by those whose aim was merely to make a livelihood by turning their pen to use as art critics than was Watts. Every conception was the result of an individual vivid impression which had nothing whatever to do with picture making, any more than had William Blake's creations to do with picture making. Each invention was an inspiring surprise even to himself. Though he said he had never, except in the instance of "Time, Death, and Judgment," seen a vision of the subject in his mind's eye, it was a combination of impressions on that mind's eye, and the inspiration of an idea in his brain, which shot out something like nothing else in art, but which became so fixed in his brain that he could work from the conception for years and it would not alter one whit in its main features. But what was

"TIME UNVEILING TRUTH"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

the ordinary newspaper critic of that day to say about such stuff as that? He had no clue; it was not like anything else; how was he to get his copy out of it? He must appear wise, Watts could not be exactly ignored, so he generally ended by abusing it as not having the good qualities of work to which the critic chose to compare it—creative imagination being the last power such writers dreamt of ascribing to any of Watts' art in those days. We read much "criticism" in the newspapers in which we recognised this process as having taken place.[1]

When, however, an intelligent criticism was written he fully valued it. On January 7, 1882, he wrote from Brighton that the article in *The Times*, while gratifying him, as proving not only a wish to understand the impulses under the influence of which Watts had always worked, but also that perception of them which he has so rarely met with from the critic would, he was afraid, appear to be written in too friendly a spirit, and might, even among some more generally successful artists, have been so by implied comparisons. He wrote he should be sorry for this, for much as he valued the praise for intention, which he could not but feel to be his due, his feeling upon reading the article a second time was almost one of alarm. He would be sorry if excessive

[1] To this habit of the critics with respect to his early picture, "The Heron," Watts refers in a letter written May 19, 1889: "I see in the same paper (*Spectator*) a notice of the New Gallery; it is strange that one can never do anything in the way of painting without being supposed to be prompted by some old master. The critic finds the influence of Hondecoeter! I don't suppose at the time I painted "The Heron" I had ever seen a picture by the Dutch painter, and even now I hardly recall anything of his. I think the criticism otherwise good enough! I daresay the head wants truth, for it was not studied from a living model, and cannot compare with Japanese birds." Whatever interest Watts took in reading the criticisms on his own art, he always maintained that living in an age when the artist was being constantly exposed to criticism was detrimental to the state of mind which was the happiest and best for the highest interests of his work.

approval of his aims, and the outcome, should read like reflection upon other artists; and, indeed, he thought that the critic had gone beyond this. All his life he had done without public applause, and still felt that he would rather be undervalued than overrated. Yet, as he had said before, he was gratified to find his feeling and intentions intellectually read; here, for the first time, a critic found the things which so generally seem to be anachronisms, echoes of intensely modern feeling; so much was Watts gratified and surprised, that he could not help writing to the critic to thank him for taking so much trouble. He hoped he (the writer) would not think thereby that he had used "soft sawder" for the purpose of getting more praise and depreciating just censure! This letter was written on a Friday evening. The next day he wrote a postscript, dated Saturday—"The above I wrote last night. This morning your letter brings me pleasant news that the exhibition does not seem to be a failure generally." He wondered how far it was a real success! and added that of course the people whom we saw, as a rule would see rather what he had intended than what was. Somehow the praise of *The Times'* critic made him feel culpable,[1] and as if he, Watts, had been taking something from other workers; but he felt, nevertheless, that it was pleasant to be rightly interpreted, and so far, he thought, he had a right to be pleased; the critic had not exaggerated his aspirations. He finished the letter by saying he is puzzled what to do about Fryatt! (a workman Canon Barnett had recommended to Watts through Mr. Barrington, to help him in his sculpture). "If I had plenty of money I should know very well, but as more than ever

[1] This feeling resulted partly from the fact that Watts had had a conversation with the critic with reference to his Grosvenor Gallery exhibition before the article in *The Times* was written.

I intend to devote myself to those objects which neither Quilter nor any one else can render popular, I must look at every penny."

Though many pictures returned to Little Holland House after the exhibition in the Grosvenor Gallery, a certain number were sold as the result of their having been seen there. It certainly led to a much higher and wider appreciation of Watts' art, and brought many more visitors to his own gallery. It was a visit from an American to this gallery which led to the exhibition of Watts' pictures in New York in the years 1885-6. Watts introduced me to this visitor, who expressed a great wish that we should arrange for such an exhibition, Watts' work being practically unknown in America at that time. An anxious but most interesting time followed. The scheme was full of difficulties. The American artist, Mr. Frank Millett, gave most valuable aid, and Watts began to decide which pictures should be sent. Still there remained what appeared to be an almost insurmountable wall. The duty on works of art when entering America was so enormous that no one seemed prepared to pay it. A most ingenious method was thought of. The whole of the Metropolitan Museum, where the pictures would be exhibited, were they sent, must be put into bond. On any picture that was sold leaving the museum, and remaining in America, duty must, as a matter of course, be paid, but the pictures that left England and came back would, never having been taken out of bond, escape the duty. This was done, and I made the lists of the pictures, and also wrote the preface to the catalogue, discussing each sentence with Watts, so that, though it was my writing, Watts passed every word as being in accord with his views and intentions. For this reason I reprint it in full among these reminiscences. When it was nearly all settled I went

to Somerset. Watts wrote to me that he could not get "Watchman, what of the Night?" or "The Island of Cos," but "The Dove that Returned not Again" and Leslie Stephen's portrait were to be added to our list. "My own portrait," he writes, "I don't want to go, and Panizzi I won't send" (Watts always spoke of this portrait as one of his very best). "Fifty-three is a very good number—quite enough." He was sorry to say "Love and Death" and "Time, Death, and Judgment" were quite unfinished, for he had been losing a great deal of time by having been constantly ill. They had, Watts wrote, character and aim, and therefore he sent them, but he should like it to be made clear that he only sent them for those reasons. The "Eve" was also unfinished as regarded the background, &c., but he had done a great deal to it, and he thought I would like it; also he believed he had very greatly improved the "White Horse"—"very greatly, I think!" Still all these he considered were incomplete, for they could only be completed by constant returning to and working upon. If they returned he hoped to make them much better. The pictures, fifty-three in number, were sent, but more than a fortnight elapsed and nothing was heard of them. Watts naturally became most anxious, and, pessimistic as ever, anticipated the worst. He endeavoured to force his mind into a philosophical attitude, and accept with composure the fact that a greater part of his life's work had gone to the bottom of the sea! However, a joyful note arrives: "The vessel has gone into port all right, but the pictures cannot be unpacked for a few days, so whether they have suffered or not during a very bad passage cannot be known yet. I am as well as ever I am, and it would be very ungrateful to complain. Still improvements in all ways would be very possible *without disturbing the uniformity of nature.*"

"PEACE AND WAR"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

"PEACE AND WAR"
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

Encouraging letters arrive to me from America, but Watts is incredulous as to the success of the exhibition. He had made up his mind it would be a failure. He had a presentiment it would be so. He writes, "I hear nothing from America, and really can't help thinking if the success of the things had been real or satisfactory—would have written. I do not think much about the matter, and am certainly not troubled by it, but for the sake of so many people I should be sorry for failure." Another example of Watts' ignoring the unreal and stilted position some people gave him, I find in a letter written respecting this exhibition. He was much vexed that certain dock-dues had not been refunded to Mr. Smith, the frame-maker and packer, who had paid them. Watts wrote that he was prepared to bear the expense and say nothing about it, though it would be really a serious matter, but that it did not do to shrink from practical responsibilities while making splendid exclamations about the "horrible" impropriety of speaking to him on the matter; "that I think ludicrous," he adds, referring to a letter from an American who appeared to be appalled that such a mundane matter as dock-dues should have been even mentioned to Watts!

Soon the admiration expressed showed Watts that his works were doing some good. I received many letters full of enthusiasm. He sent me one letter from Mr. Frank Millett. It said: "You have heard, no doubt, of the unparalleled success your pictures are having here, so I won't trouble you with any description of it. We are all very glad you are going to permit the pictures to remain here longer. They have done our art here a great good, and it is most gratifying to find them so much appreciated." In the New York *Daily Tribune*, which was sent me, of March 11, 1886, the following paragraph appeared: "Lovers of art

will learn with pleasure that the Watts collection of pictures will remain on exhibition until October. Ever since it has been shown great crowds have been attracted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the trustees decided that while so much good was being accomplished the pictures ought not to be sent home. Mr. Watts gracefully complied with the request to lend them a little longer.

IDEAS AND METHODS[1]

Preface from the Illustrated Catalogue of the Loan Collection of Paintings by G. F. Watts, R.A., in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, May to October 1885, *by Mrs. Russell Barrington.*

In selecting pictures to send to this exhibition, the artist has chosen those which he considers show most distinctly the character, aim, and intention of his work. It is obvious that among these are some which are far from being finished works—some, moreover, which in all probability he will continue to retouch and endeavour to improve as long as he is able to work. He has never painted any pictures with a view to their being exhibited, his sole object being to express certain moods of thought and feeling through the language of art. He believes that some of the subjects he has chosen deserve all the labour that can be bestowed upon them, and that, though some of the pictures are unfinished, they show the aim toward which he works sufficiently clearly to make them characteristic examples of his art. The "Paolo and Francesca" and the "Orpheus and Eurydice" are, he considers, finally finished; but "Time, Death, and Judgment," "Love and Death," and the "Eve Tempted," he hopes to improve considerably by future work. "Love and Death" was in a more finished condition at one time,

[1] Reprinted from "A Retrospect."

FIGURE, SYMBOLICAL OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE

From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

but Mr. Watts had painted out portions in order to improve it before there was any question of sending the pictures to America, and, owing to ill-health during the last three months, had not been able to work upon it as he would have wished to do before sending it.

In none of this artist's work, not even in the painting of portraits, have realistic qualities been the chief aim. The desire has been always to suggest the abstract side of the ideas which the artist has endeavoured to convey through the medium of his art; to suggest a beauty which shall touch the intellectual and finer sensibilities as well as a beauty which alone strikes the eye. Mr. Watts has tried to embody in art an echo of the essential interests of life; something more complete in its suggestiveness to the whole of human nature than mere artistic completeness could ever be. The very nature of this aspiration has excluded the possibility of the kind of finish which is possible in realistic work, because the treatment which is appropriate to the character of his subjects does not befit a realistic study of nature. He has striven, moreover, after that truth in art, which would be less true were it realistically portrayed, inasmuch as such realism would jar with and put out of tune qualities which are essential in imaginative art, in the same manner that a real object coming before us and striking our physical eye will obliterate a vision of memory or imagination, which our mental eye has been dwelling on. The truth which he aims at expressing in his art is that which, being consistent with the unvarying laws of nature, at the same time contains a suggestion of nature's ideality, the truth which embraces at once nature's obvious facts and immutable laws, and her poetry. To keep a right balance and harmony between structural, scientific truth, and poetical, ideal truth, necessitates, he believes, a treatment the contrary of realistic, one which shall carry the

work into an atmosphere congenial with subjects which appeal to the least material part of our nature.

Mr. Watts carries this aim into the most technical qualities of his art, be it painting or sculpture, as well as into the more general treatment. He aims at combining great precision and exactness in rendering the essential truths of form and the delicate gradation and harmony which are found in nature's colouring, with a free, loose touch which gives a palpitating, tremulous quality to the surface of a painting, and approximates, he thinks, nearest to the constant condition of the atmosphere in nature.

In painting portraits he has worked quite as much from a mental vision created by the impression which the nature, career, and character of his sitter has produced on his own mind, than from the personality before him. He endeavours to give us the essential, individualising characteristics—the very nature of the man; his aspect as it is influenced by his mind, character, and employment, be he poet, artist, statesman, musician, ecclesiastic, or soldier. How the light struck certain forms and colours at a given moment in the steady north light of a studio, producing patches of light and shade, colour and tone upon certain forms and tints, these are the facts alone which many painters of the realistic school aim at recording in painting portraits, and most forcible momentary impressions are thus rendered by the genius of a few; but Mr. Watts' interest has been excited by the more intellectual conception of portrait-painting, and he has not cared so much to render the physical aspect of his sitters at one given moment as to suggest the impression their appearance would leave on the memory of interested and observant friends.

Portrait-painting he considers the best study any artist can have for ideal work. It makes the artist familiar with

the various ways in which form influences expression, and in which different types are suggestive of different classes of nature and feeling.

Where imaginative truth in the conception is aimed at, a wide experience of nature's variety in form and proportion will give not only courage, but power in carrying out the conception. Full emphasis can be given to the individuality of the type which is chosen by the artist to express the sentiment he desires, without running the risk of exaggerating and over-emphasising expression beyond the limits of nature's own laws of beauty and harmony. In brief, he believes that careful, direct, and honest portrait-painting is the shortest way in which an artist can acquire knowledge, and the best antidote against mannerism. At the same time he strongly disapproves of mixing the spirit of direct portraiture and the sentiment of idealism in the same work, for the reasons before named—namely, a piece of pure portraiture must always jar in a work which is ideal in its sentiment, because what we see or could see any day would not harmonise with a purely imaginative conception. Not that there are no beautiful and characteristic examples of form and colour in the men and women whom we meet about the world, which might often accord with the type required by an artist to carry out an imaginative conception, or that careful studies from such examples might not be valuable, but that the treatment in the ideal work itself must be different, an appearance of direct portraiture being out of place. He believes that working from models, in a spirit of merely copying faithfully what is before the eye, is destructive to the harmony which ought to exist between an imaginative conception and the carrying of it out in a form of art. He has, therefore, on principle, never used models in the same way that modern artists use them. When he

has been struck with any remarkable form or colour, he has endeavoured to master the source of the impression of beauty made on him. He has drawn careful studies in order to find out in what consists the particular variation of the ordinary proportion which has produced the effect on his mind of uncommon beauty; but he has never inserted an actual imitation either of face or form directly into an imaginative work. Necessarily, in following out this principle, he has had to relinquish a certain kind of finish and imitation of nature which those who care for minutiæ in painting will miss in his work. The endeavour to carry out this principle has necessitated, as it always must, a very laborious and incessant study of the unvarying laws which govern form and the principles on which are based the effect of line, colour, and tone in nature; for, of course, knowledge is the more necessary the less the artist copies directly from nature. In the technical part of his art, Mr. Watts does not strive to produce an effect by painting *alla prima*. Certain portraits he has painted in at once. Mr. Leslie Stephen's portrait was painted in one sitting of about two hours; Lord Shrewsbury's in a sitting of an hour, to show a friend how to begin a head in oil painting; but in none of his subject-pictures has he ever attempted to produce the effect he desired in a single painting. His feeling has always been the same as that of Titian described by Boschini in the following words: "He (Titian) never did a figure at once (*alla prima*), and used to say that any one who improvised (*cheachi canta all' improvviso*) could never make verses that were profound or really well put together."

The art which Mr. Watts has cared for, which he has thought worthy of the immense labour which really good painting and sculpture involves, is the art which is profound, which contains that element which appeals to the noblest

FIGURE, REPRESENTING POETRY
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

FIGURE, REPRESENTING SCIENCE
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

FIGURE, REPRESENTING THE ARTS
From Wall Painting by G. F. Watts

and deepest sensibilities in human nature and to the imagination; the art which is consonant with great music and great poetry, and which implies an association with great ideas. He feels that realistic art, as modern schools understand it, can never be this. It may amuse, interest, and cultivate the perceptive faculties, but it does not set the mind going, on further and higher lines, and awakens in the mind no thoughts of its own. It merely suggests the effect of a moment seized by the artist with "disinterested curiosity" (the admirable expression used by Matthew Arnold with reference to the work of literary realists), and, finding no echo in the heart and imagination of future generations, it will not live. For we must remember that what is real to us in the art of the past is that element which was the result of efforts of imagination and an expression of deep feeling. The work of Michael Angelo, Titian, Dante, Shakespeare, is the reality of its time to us. In those faithful portraits found on many tombs throughout Italy; in all the portraits painted in times when art has really been alive, is there not a record of lovingness in the doing of the work which gives a nobility to the quaintest of physiognomies? No art or literature which speaks to us vividly out of the past was ever inspired solely by "disinterested curiosity." The artist whom Plato, in his "Phædrus," puts in the first category, in classing conditions of men, is not, surely, one who amuses and interests us for the moment only. The artist whose soul, according to Plato, has come to birth seeing most of truth, should be one, surely, whose influence is deep and lasting; one who has endeavoured to touch the mainsprings of thought and feeling in human nature; one who can never be in or out of fashion, but always real and living. The art which revives afresh and responds to the wants and feelings of every new generation, is the truly real

art—the real artists, those whose lines of thought and feeling were, in essentials, of no special date. The ground they worked on, common ground in all civilised ages for all human nature, their horizon not hemmed in or completely governed by the incidents of any present. Mr. Watts' aim has been to express in his art the thoughts and feelings which have moved him seriously; to echo in his life's work all that he feels as noblest and best. His is essentially serious art, and any failure there may be in it is certainly not owing to a want of earnestness in the pursuit of the best, or to an inadequacy of aim, or any lack of devotion.

A few very distinct principles Mr. Watts holds as regards the best method of painting. The ground of all painting should be kept as light as possible because what is underneath will always have a tendency to show through more and more, the older the picture becomes. The tendency of oil being to blacken as time goes on, a counteracting influence of a light ground is necessary to prevent the picture becoming too dark. Again, in putting on the colour there should never be anything like a smear in painting; an edge, however soft and delicate, should be distinct and clean. Between each painting the colour should be allowed to dry thoroughly and not be retouched till it is quite hard. This, he believes, is the only means by which anything like freshness can be retained in the quality when there is more than one painting. He also believes that the purer the tint can be put on the better, the modifying and gradating it being left for an after process and only added when the first layer of paint is quite dry, as the pure colour will then always shine through more freshly than when it is mixed with others while wet.

DESCRIPTION OF SOME OF THE PICTURES SENT TO AMERICA.

"*The Happy Warrior*"; *date*, 1884.

To do the most a soldier can do for his country, to die for it, and in dying to see a vision of his love bending over him and kissing his brow, is the meaning the artist intends to convey by the title he has given this picture.

> "Not conquered he who sinks upon the field,
> Consents to die, consenting not to yield,
> Whose steadfast heart death perils cannot move,
> True to his faith, his duty, and his love."

"*Paolo and Francesca.*"

The design of this picture was begun many years ago. Since it was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, in the year 1882, the artist has almost repainted it. He now considers it quite finished. The pale spirits of Paolo and Francesca are whirled in the hurricane of the second circle of Dante's "Inferno"—

> "Th' Infernal hurricane, that knows no sleep,
> Propels the spirits with its ruinous force,
> Whirls, smites, torments them in its reckless sweep.
> As through the air doves to the cherished nest,
> With wings firm set and wide expanded, fly,
> By loving instinct borne along, and press'd,
> So forth came these from Dido's company,
> Speeding their way through the dim air malign,
> So potent spake the tender, loving cry."

The artist has endeavoured to record in the countenances of these lovers their hopeless, tender love abiding through endless suffering; the passion of love imprinted for ever on their souls, to be traced now only through the vaporous atmosphere of a spirit-world. Memory in these pale spirits,

retaining a full consciousness of past joy, only adds acuter suffering to present pain.

> "No pain can greater prove
> Than the remembrance of past joys to wake
> When suffering."

Francesca's head leans on her lover's shoulder; both faces are dimmed by the ashy pallor of a death passed through. With joined hands and arms clasped round each other, they are being whirled like faded leaves before the wind, their drapery caught back into the turbid currents of sulphurous gloom, into "*La bufera infernal.*"

Inseparably are Paolo and Francesca linked together. Dante so far respected their passion that, in ordaining their punishment, he spares them at least the pain of separation. Still he means that their endless suffering should be so ever present, the joy of the past so vividly remembered, and yet so irrecoverable, that while Francesca is describing how their love awakened, Dante is so overcome with pity that he swoons as one dead.

> "The whiles this sad one spirit, th' other so
> Wept, that heart-struck with pity's tender force,
> I swooned, as if in life's expiring throe,
> And fell, as falls upon the earth a corse."

This picture, and the "Fata Morgana," are the only two the artist has ever painted which are simply illustrations of written poems.

"*Orpheus and Eurydice.*"

This picture was painted some years ago, but it has been nearly repainted since it was exhibited in France and in the Grosvenor Gallery, in 1882, the object in so doing being to get rid of everything approaching to black in the colouring.

Orpheus, too impatient to wait, turns back, contrary to his promise, to see if Eurydice is following him out of Hades. Eurydice is instantly struck and caught back into the shades of the spirit world. She does not die nor swoon, but her fate snatches her from the light of the world she was emerging into, back into the gloom and twilight of Hades. In vain, letting fall his lyre, Orpheus encircles her with his arm; the powers that foretold her fate, should he once turn till he passed beyond the gates of Hades, have stricken her.

"*Time, Death, and Judgment*" (*commenced many years ago*).

Figures of heroic size represent these three powerful agencies, Time, Death, and Judgment. Time is painted as one possessed of unalterable youth, nude to the waist, holding forward a scythe in his right hand. Death is represented by the figure of a woman, amply draped. They are wading hand in hand together through the waves of the stream of life. The eyes of Time are stony, with an unchangeable, never-failing youth; not cruel, only heedless of what may happen as he inevitably presses forward, pausing neither to inflict, to spare, nor to mend. He is represented as advancing in strides, marking the recurrence of conditions—the hours, days, months, and years. Death, his inevitable mate, glides silently by his side, doing her work at unexpected, uncalculated moments. Her lap is full of gathered flowers, buds, blossoms, faded leaves, all together, fulfilling, as she goes, her mysterious mission of gathering to herself the young, the old, the middle-aged, indiscriminately, it would seem, but with the unswerving certainty of fate, irrespective of all human calculations or

desires. Behind, in the wake of Time and Death, flies the no less inevitable Nemesis, her face hidden by the outstretched arm which carries the deciding scales. In her other hand she grasps the avenging sword, and her flame-coloured drapery flies, like a track of fire, back into blue space, where revolve the golden sun, and the pale crescent moon, "Earth's dead child." This is a picture the influence of which would probably be best felt were it seen in a niche by itself, in a cloister or a church, not in an art gallery or museum. The artist has allowed this design to be carried out in a mosaic which is to be placed on the Church of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, in one of the poorest and most overcrowded districts in the east of London.

The subject of this picture, though one of the simplest, and expressing the most plain and most ever-present truths, ought, the painter has thought, to be one of the most impressive, and on no other picture has he bestowed more thought or labour. The treatment is broad, and suggests size. The figures are sculpturesque in character, not hewn out of smooth, delicate marble, but out of a rough, enduring adamant. They are beings who move in larger conditions than those encircling humanity; creatures who view a wider horizon than that which bounds our vision. Therefore, these powers, though imagined in the form of human beings, intentionally do not suggest the men and women we see about us, but a Titanic race belonging to larger spheres than those of our earth.

"*The Mid-day Rest.*"

Painted in 1864, in the garden of the old Little Holland House. The picture of the Dray Horses is, perhaps, the only purely historical work which the artist has painted. The race

of splendid animals, of which these two are fine examples, will, in all probability, soon cease to exist. We have a future before us of steam, electricity, and machinery, which will do their work for us. We have here a record of a typically English sight. In painting the forms of this grand-looking class of horse, the artist has endeavoured to suggest the sense of repose and latent power, which is, or rather has been, one of the finest characteristics of our English life, but which is fast waning and becoming part of our past. We are being hurried into a cosmopolitan eagerness and excitability, and every year, more and more, are the restless mites and midges of the sunshine teasing us into a desire to emulate other nations by striving after a sort of cosmopolitan culture, and by the endeavour to make our habits and manners vivacious and demonstrative, like those of our friskier French neighbours. But round the huge creatures and their stolid driver, painted in this picture, lingers still the atmosphere of peaceful security and quiescence, and the phlegm of old-fashioned English life, suggesting a certain grandeur of reposefulness and size. Before all landmarks of old customs and habits have died out, before another generation has arisen, a quite new Pharaoh, "who knew not Joseph," the artist has thought it well to make a historical record in painting of such a characteristic phase of English life, which, moreover, gives scope for a study of the magnificent form to be found in the Brewer's Dray Horses.

"*Love and Life*" (*the companion picture to* "*Love and Death*").

Begun in February 1884; finished in June 1884. The design was made in 1883. Love is represented by the winged figure of a youth, and Life by that of a young girl,

who, clinging to Love, is being guided by him over the rough places of a rocky precipice which both are ascending together. Love is leading the way, and helping Life, by his support and tenderness, to climb the difficult path—emblematic of the struggling conditions which, more or less, are the portion of all human existence. The half-extended wings of Love shade the rays of light from beating too fiercely on the delicate figure of Life. Love's footsteps can be traced on the rocky ascent by the daisy flowers which have sprung up in his track. The atmosphere of the picture is bathed in the gold of light and the blue of space. As the figures ascend, the air becomes more golden with light. Love, while helping to endure and overcome the struggles of existence, leads upward into purer, brighter conditions. The truth which the artist has tried to embody in this picture, is that Love, in its widest, most universal sense—in the sense of charity, sympathy, and unselfishness—raises Life upward; that humanity is helped by tender aid on the one hand, and by tender trust on the other. He has purposely kept the picture light and simple, and the figure representing Life fragile and slight. Poor humanity is so frail a thing, in the midst of what Carlyle calls the "Immensities," without the strength which Love alone can give!

"Ariadne"; lent by Louisa, Lady Ashburton.

The particular time in the story of Ariadne which the artist has chosen, is later on than that chosen by Titian in his famous picture of "Bacchus and Ariadne," in the National Gallery in London. Oblivious of her union with Bacchus, Ariadne is rapt in a reverie while looking out into the blue mists of distant sea, into which the deserter Theseus

has vanished. A sense of queenliness is meant to be expressed in her form and attitude. Her arms fall listlessly by her side, and she does not heed the touch of the bright maiden who comes through the wood behind her from the gay train of Bacchus to remind her of the revels, and to summon her again to join the jovial company. The panthers that belong to the rout of Bacchus play at her feet.

"*Chaos*"; *date*, 1882.

This sketch was sent because the design of it is the first in a series of designs which, in their entirety, the artist had hoped to carry out as the principal work of his life. His intention was to describe the story of mankind as it comes to us through biblical, mythical, poetical, and verifiable history, viewing it from the standpoint of the present time. This he designed with the intention of carrying it out on an heroic scale, round the walls of a great hall or room, and would gladly have done so without remuneration, had the opportunity been afforded him. That it was not, was the great regret of his life; for not only the encouragement, but the means of carrying out this work being denied him, he felt he had never been able to express himself fully in his own special language of art. He felt he had missed giving utterance to the conceptions which were the best he was capable of, in the form which would have best suited his powers, and that, instead of having produced a complete work, only fragments remain to show the direction of his scheme.

In the design before us we have what may stand as the opening chapter of the book. On the left is represented the period of violence, the upheaving and disturbance previous to the regular course of things establishing itself in

our planet. This passes in the middle of the picture into an indefinite period, a vaporous uncertainty of atmosphere, of unborn creations. Light is still veiled by mists, and air and waters mingle. Here and there a figure in the swollen tides marks the beginning of the strides of time. In the third part of the picture, colossal forms, silent and quiescent, symbols of mountain ranges, suggest an established state of things. The current of time, in the middle part of the composition, indicated by detached figures, is now a continuous stream. The artist's desire was not merely to repeat the incidents of history as recorded by the poets and as painted by the old masters, but to interpret the story of the world from his own point of view, including in the interpretation a modern vein of thought and feeling, and regarding the past from the more comprehensive area of modern acquirement.

Taking a large view of the important incidents of the world's history, such part of it as could be expressed in a pictorial form, he hoped to have painted the salient points on which turned the changes and progress of the world as we know it, and to have described the past by the light of the present; in so doing to create in his own time an art, comprehensive enough in its own character to affect the interests of all times, yet special enough to be stamped with the fervour of contemporary interest. This would have led the composition into the story of human life. A few fragments of the scheme can be seen in the designs of the "Creation of Eve," the "Eve Tempted," "Eve Repentant," the "Newly Created Eve," and "Cain."

LITTLE HOLLAND HOUSE GALLERY.

"The Creation of Eve."

Their work done, the angels are rising into light, singing a chorus of praise. One is touching Adam with a finger to arouse him from his torpor. The companion picture, of which a photograph has been sent, is "The Denunciation of Adam and Eve" after their trespass, where the descending angels contrast with the ascending angels in this picture.

"Uldra"; painted in 1884.

Uldra is a nymph-like fairy, a Scandinavian myth, who is supposed to be only visible through the rainbow of dewy mists and fountains. This is, perhaps, the best example of an atmospheric effect in a figure-picture among Mr. Watts' works. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to procure "The Carrara Mountains," or the "Island of Cos" for this exhibition, as the owners would not lend them. This is to be regretted, as they are the most finished examples of painted atmosphere which the artist has made in land and sea subjects.

"Love and Death."

Begun about the year 1869, worked on at intervals till within the last nine months. This picture was at one time in a more finished condition, but the artist painted out portions of it in order to improve it, and, owing to ill-health during the last three months (1882), he has not been able to retouch it, as he wished to do, before sending it. The idea of this picture first came to the artist's mind about fifteen years ago. He was then painting the portrait of a man who,

while still young, and showing every promise of becoming one of the most distinguished men of his time, was attacked by a lingering and fatal illness. The portrait was continued at intervals. At each sitting the artist felt the disease had progressed a stage nearer the end. Everything that love could do opposed it in vain. Out of sympathy for the sorrow of those who had striven so hard and so fruitlessly to keep Death at bay, arose the idea of the subject of this picture, "Love and Death." The draped figure, whose back alone we see, who is meant to represent a messenger of Death, is entering through the doorway of a home where Love has reigned. Love meets this "shining one" (as Bunyan expressed it) on the threshold, and thrusts out his arm to oppose the entrance of his enemy. The solemn figure moves forward notwithstanding, as it were inevitably, rather than as if forcing a way; a fatal doom, against which the struggles of Love are in vain. Death overshadows his figure, except where a few bright rays of colour still light on his brow, on the roses which wreathe it, and on the arm which clings still to the doorway. In his anguish he gazes appealingly up into the face of the awful stranger, while with his outstretched arm he attempts to resist advance. But, with wings crushed, he is thrust aside, and thrown back on the garlands of roses which grow round the entrance of his dwelling. Though we do not see his enemy's face, we are not meant to feel it would be hideous, however awful. This messenger is but the unswerving agent to an all-powerful will which rules over poor humanity, and, in the fulfilment of whose laws the wounding of human feeling, however deep, and pure, and strong, counts as no obstacle. The intention in this picture has been to embody in a pictorial expression a suggestion of the world-old mystery, the conflict between Love and Death; to endeavour to transmit by form and colour a vision

of an idea; to suggest, in the figure of Love, beauty, tender passion, and the struggle of unavailing anguish; and in the figure of Death, solemnity, power, irresistible and unconquerable; also an echo of that mystery which veils the unknown. Intentionally has the character and style of the work been kept as monumental as possible; in every sense the very reverse of realistic.

"*Found Drowned.*"

Under an arch of Waterloo Bridge, in London, on the mud which has been left dry by the receding tide, lies a suicide. The subject is identical with that of Hood's poem, but was not taken from it, but suggested by an incident seen by the artist.

"*The Genius of Greek Poetry*"; *painted in* 1878.

The intention of the artist in painting this picture has been to endeavour to render the significance, the local tone, and especially the anthropomorphic character of the Genius of Greek poetry. The prominence humanity held in the Greek mind, the association of the effects in nature, and the entire conditions in the world with humanity being so strong that all effects and moods of nature weave themselves in his imagination into semi-human existences; the winds and currents, the hours of the days, the earth, sea, and air, all natural phenomena he invests with human forms, attributes, and moods. The figure seated on a rock is intended to be an emblem of this Greek Genius, not a Greek man. The whole atmosphere of the picture is steeped in warm, golden light, shadowed by blue haze on the sea and sky, but deeper and more glowing on the

foreground, figure, and rocks, indicative of the enjoyment of southern warmth and light and air. This picture would be more easily explained were the pendant picture beside it, "The Genius of Northern Poetry," darker, more mysterious, less human in attributes than the Greek Genius.

"*Cain.*"

Designs for the life-size composition in the Diploma Gallery at Burlington House, Royal Academy.

The figure of the slain Abel lies on the ground while his sacrifice rises in a pillar of flame straight up to Heaven. The standing figure of Cain is overshadowed by the avengers who swoop down upon him. These may be understood as the voices of conscience.

The "Eve Tempted."

This design is one of a series of three, of which photographs have been sent to this exhibition in order to show the relative place of the picture before us. In the first design, "The Newly Created Eve," the figure rises column-like in praise and delight at her creation. In the second, "Eve Tempted," she bends forward toward the fruit which is tempting her, not plucking it, but allowing herself to be allured by the seductive fragrance; and in the third she has thrown herself against the stem of a tree, her hands clasped above her head, her figure shrouded by her hair. The first and third were not sufficiently finished to send. All three figures are colossal in size, and represent a type which may suggest the mother of all the human race. The colour in the "Newly Created Eve" is glowing and golden;

in the "Eve Tempted," more intricate and jewel-like; in the "Eve Repentant," shaded blue and saddened into twilight.

"When Poverty comes in at the Door, Love flies out of the Window"; painted in 1879.

Love is poised on the sill of the open window with outspread wings, just starting to fly away, for the door is being opened by haggard Poverty, followed in his wake by the wolf Hunger. Through the opening, dry dead leaves are whirling into the room before him. Meantime a little lady is still futilely playing on a couch with her rose-leaves. Her cupboard door, with broken hinge, hangs untidily above her; her work lies upset, all strewn and tangled on the floor; idleness and carelessness accounting for the appearance of the ugly visitor. The picture is on a smaller scale than that on which the artist usually works, and is painted chiefly in water-colour.

"The Dove that Returned not Again"; painted in 1878.

This is the companion picture of "The Dove returning to the Ark," which, owing to its being painted on panel, could not be sent to America. The flood is subsiding, and the dove has found a branch of a tree to rest on. The ivy-leaves that cling to it are sodden and brown, and, caught in a fork of the stem, are remnants of drapery and jewels, tokens of the flood. The cloudy vapours have lifted; there is an awakening of light and colour, still misty and young, like the blue eye of a child when it first wakes into the life and movement of the day. Nature is readjusting herself to a brighter, happier mood. It is a contrast to its

companion picture, where the monotony of the heavy swollen tides, receding away to the horizon, is only varied by the changes which distance gives to the wide spaces of the waters and to the gray of a sullen, hopeless sky. In this picture the dove is seeking a refuge in the shelter of the ark; in the one before us the dove has found its home under the wider shelter of the sky.

"THE DUALITY OF MY NATURE."

It was respecting this exhibition in America that a misunderstanding arose which caused an angry correspondence in the newspapers in New York between two eager combative critics. Each had reason to suppose that he was acting as Watts' mouthpiece, and naturally resented this attitude being disputed by the other. One of these gentlemen wrote indignant letters to Watts, using harsh terms as to his conduct in the matter. This dispute caused Watts great disturbance and distress. He was at Brighton at the time when the anger of the two critics flared out in print on the other side of the Atlantic, and on most days letters would be written to me on the subject. In analysing his own character in conversation, he would often express himself puzzled by the "duality of my nature." He wrote in a letter recounting this misunderstanding with his critics, "You know how often I have spoken of the extraordinary duality of my nature." He further wrote he did not think there was any one in the world who more desired the best than he did, nor whose eyes were more earnestly fixed on the good and true and noble, in fact, whose every sense was more in harmony with the best he *tried* to suggest in his work; yet a

nervous irritability was always putting him in the wrong, while his sense of justice was as surely afflicting him with the heaviest of penalties, the loss of his own esteem. To such an extent was this the case that he wearied of the world, and had long begun to count the years that would bring the end nearer, with satisfaction. He had long ceased to hope that he could ever do more in his art than indicate how much more he desired to do. He then proceeds to describe every detail of the imbroglio, beginning by saying I had been quite right in warning him against having any transaction with ——.[1] After describing minutely the transaction in question, he wrote pages and pages expressing his remorse. He had been most wrong, very wrong indeed. He could not tell you how this feeling poisoned his moments.

I need hardly say that this excessive remorse was caused by Watts having very much exaggerated to himself the importance of the whole transaction. With certain people he was not safe. There seemed to be a link wanting in his instincts. The critic who wrote him the angry letter was not in fault, and indeed had very just cause, from his point of view, to be angry with Watts. Any judicious friend who possessed Watts' confidence must have found that in most business transactions he required, so to speak, to be protected against himself. His want of memory, except in all that pertained to his art, and the fact that he devoted all the best of his mind to his art, made him at times extraordinarily forgetful in ordinary everyday transactions; but doubtless the chief difficulties of his life were caused by

[1] This warning I had given Watts, not from any unfriendliness or distrust of the critic in question, but because I felt convinced that he and Watts would not understand each other, and that a "fuss" might arise, and fusses created the worst possible atmosphere for Watts and for his work.

what he described himself as a nervous irritability always putting him in the wrong. As I said before, neither Mr. Barrington nor I ever once saw this irritability evince itself as far as our personal relations with him were concerned. There were also intricacies in his nature which made it very difficult for him to steer clear of rocks which it was his most genuine intention to avoid. Among the many causes which led to a deep-seated melancholy in him, this "duality," this consciousness of inconsistency, may probably have been the greatest.

His want of memory entangled him in one of these irritations some time before the "critics" disturbance. We were in Somerset when, in the autumn of 1855, I received a letter saying that the weather was "dreadful" for painting, but that it would matter little to him, as he was seriously thinking it might be necessary for him to leave this country altogether. He added that we knew that his desire and object were to have no trouble about money, but to paint his pictures with the view of making them public property. The income-tax people were bothering him, and he found that it was very possible he might be charged upon the valuation of the work he did, and that he had done. This would be simply ruinous, and more than he could possibly meet, in which case he would sell his house and go to live and work in Italy. "I don't know what *party*, confound them both, is responsible for such a state of things. Permission to work! Really, it is too bad. As to working for money any more, I cannot, and will not.—SIGNOR." I answered that I hoped he would let us know the train and boat he was leaving by, that we might see him off! On returning to London we discussed this income-tax matter with a mutual friend who was then sitting for his portrait to Watts, and a representation was made to the Inland

Revenue people, proving that no income-tax ought to be charged on Watts' gallery and studios, as he was making no income out of their contents. The whole matter was *en train*, and a successful solution was about to be secured, when Watts suddenly recollected that he had sold pictures that year, and our case naturally broke down. There was always the chance of an interesting surprise with Watts. Respecting the baronetcy he was offered, he allowed his friends three days in which to congratulate him; then he let it be announced that he had refused it. With regard to this refusal much has been written and said. The truth of the matter was very simple, and had no reference whatever to any dislike Watts had of receiving the title. He told me the reason why he refused the honour, and though we were disappointed, we could not dispute his wisdom in having done so. Leighton, to whom Watts was indebted for the offer having been made, was likewise disappointed when he refused, but Watts told him also the real reason for his doing so. Leighton discussed the whole matter with Mr. Barrington and myself a few days later, and agreed with us that Watts' reason for refusing the baronetcy was conclusive. He was not indifferent to worldly distinctions, and never for a moment pretended when with us that he was so, saying, moreover, that he would have liked much to have belonged to the aristocracy of his country; that it was an institution which he considered of great value to a nation, not only from its picturesqueness, but from the intrinsic good which its influence carried with it when worthily used; that a class which had not the burden of material anxieties had the blessing of a leisure at its command which, if used for the good of the community at large, conduced greatly, he considered, to the true nobility of a nation. He would add that the people, he had found, who abused

the aristocracy most, were those who exaggerated the importance of belonging to the class, and made its position a subject of envy.

"I should like to go into a monastery," are the words that end one of the letters in which he deplores the duality of his nature. Certainly, no one more than Watts could perceive with a finer instinct the true proportion of things — the difference which lay between the really great and the small things of this world; no one could desire more to live solely in the great and worthy side of life; still, he *would* not always leave the little things entirely alone. In the large things he was always right (provided he was not evilly influenced), in the small—scarcely ever! For the large he had the glory of inspiration and enthusiasm within himself to guide him; in the small—no safe rules, no commonplace theories, no habit of the world's jog-trot ways. As there were frayed edges to his touch in painting[1] (and one had only to try to copy Watts' work to realise how apparently uncertain, though so purposeful, were those edges), so were there frayed edges to the mind that he brought to bear on things outside his studio. I am not sure that the frayed edges of his mind were not also at times kept purposely frayed. When once within the workshop, however, the door closed on the dual self. Alone, before his easel, he was consistent—the lofty thinker, the sensitive seer, the sincere workman. Outside that door he was content to leave things vague, unthought out. He did not always care for a spade to be called a

[1] The treatment in Watts' painting was a happy combination of the definite and the indefinite, form and construction being realised and expressed with great knowledge and precision, while the actual touch was loose and free, allowing for the sense of atmosphere which floats around all objects seen by the eye. There was never, however, a smudged outline or confusion of one form with another in his work.

spade. Focalising light on bare facts would at times "disturb impressions," and would raise the discomforting idea that he ought to give his mind to business. He preferred some matters to be left toned in half shadow; were they brought into strong daylight he would have to face and grapple with them. There is a tendency to a species of mental inebriation in those possessed of the creative faculty. Such a tendency was apparent in Watts' condition, not only when he was inspired to create expressions in art, but also when he turned his imagination on to situations in real life. At such times bare, naked truth was not always what he cared to face—too much explicitness disturbed and put things out of tune with the imaginative pictures he had made of a situation. When once, however, the charm and influence of the picture conjured up by his fancy was over, and his imagination had passed on to other fields of activity, his deep-rooted sense of justice would come to the front. From these different conditions of his mind confusions naturally not unfrequently arose. He wrote (February 1885) that I am right in saying that he was not a man of business. He hoped that he would never have anything to do that would bring him in contact with what is called the world. (I had been trying to persuade him to drop a matter that was annoying him. He had been ill, and was seeing things for the time out of their due proportion.) Illness, he said, had so increased his nervousness, that almost everything looked like a "bogey." He could not read a book with any story without being ridiculously affected, and the expression of a baby's face suggested unutterable things. He hoped to be able to give himself more than ever to the endeavour after the noblest side of art, without exhibiting any more, or having any part in the professional contest. Nevertheless, notwithstanding this apparent inadequacy to cope with the world's

ways when his vitality was lowered by depression, Watts was extraordinarily clever. His mind showed itself at times as being a very ingenious piece of machinery, and he would even prove himself capable of being an astute man of business. Indeed, he seemed to possess an almost unlimited stock of power to draw from if once sufficient interest in a subject was aroused for him to focus his real mind on it. It is clearly obvious that he steered his life so that it was crowned by great worldly success. But Watts was always indulging one in the unexpected—and what more interesting? Behind this picture of success, to those who knew him best, would lurk the shadow of a more real being; the melancholy, truly inspired poet, who watched the pageant of his upward travelling life—the outward life as his own astute, clever ambition was playing it, as he would watch the rest of the world's hardness, self-interest, and success. It was this spirit of the true poet that gave us those glimpses, through the veil, and behind what we call reality, into the primeval and permanent facts of the universe, and to man's link with those things which lie at the foundation of all things; maybe, the impetus that stirred the imagination of the Celt to its profoundest depths and highest flights, was the tragic sense of contrast between that shadow—his inevitable self—and that other that ever spurred on his worldly effort and ambition. Behind the burning ambition, which refused to be satisfied with anything but the highest place for his art, whether appreciation were to be attached to him personally or to one unknown, is a yet greater artist who sees the true and eternal proportion in things which lies beyond the scope of all human handicraft; a tender soul craving for sympathy and affection, who would fain be true to itself, but is too secretive, too shyly ashamed of its own sensibilities for it to play its full worthy part in a rough world. Truly, as Watts said, it was this dual nature

which created those confusions of which he writes so lengthily and so remorsefully. He was scourged, he scourged himself, by the plague of the irreconcilable. Somewhere the link was wanting which should have harmonised this dual nature. It was the habit of procrastination, and a want of courage which he so often deplored, which made him put off the evil day, and which caused the saddest complications. How often would a little courage in the outset have obviated many a heart-burn! But Watts was never a hero in facing disagreeable or unflattering situations; and yet, as in the case of the fight of the critics over him, he would, contrary to all advice, persist in bringing about the disturbing influences himself, and no one could help him!

He suffered much through a tender-hearted sensitiveness and sympathy for the sorrows of others as well as his own, —a sensitiveness too painfully felt to show itself or to be alluded to, except on rare occasions, when an unusual vigour or some impetus of excitement gave him the courage to unveil it. The pain of pity was a frequent visitor. After he was sixty years old he told me that, looking back on his life, the most poignant pain he could remember ever having experienced from unhappiness was when he was quite a little boy. He possessed a pet canary, which he had taught to fly backwards and forwards in and out of a cupboard as he opened and shut the door, the canary catching a seed from his lips as it flew out. One day, alas! he shut the door too quickly, and the little bird was crushed in it! "Nothing has ever been to me like the pain of that moment," Watts said. "I have been through a good deal, but that was the really acutest suffering I have ever felt." He often surprised me by the great patience with which he endured the inevitable—the long days and nights of illness and wearying indisposition. It was difficult to realise that the same Watts, who could be

overbalanced by a comparatively small irritation, and excited and agitated to a degree which appeared unreasonable over a little worry, was the same who could meet real pain and lonely weariness with gentle, dignified patience, truly pathetic. When we were obliged to be in the country during part of the winter, I would have visions of that lonely figure sitting, as one has seen a sick bird sit on its perch, quite immovable, and with an almost sightless, beady brightness in the gaze of the dark eye, suffering patiently discomfort and weariness. His doctors would urge him to have a change, and became imperative in their orders after a long illness he had in the winter of 1885; but he clung to his studio, to his work, which, however, he was often too ill to get on with.

Two disturbing episodes occurred in the autumn and winter of 1885, one following the other at a distance of a few months. The letters he wrote at this time are curiously interesting, and eminently illustrative of his dual nature. There were reasons why Watts did not himself wish, nor wish me to break with the person who had caused the second disturbance. I was, however, obdurate in my censure, being indignant at having by this person been most unnecessarily dragged into this disturbance, the character of which was distasteful to me. He wrote—"in the ordinary course of human affairs you will outlive me many a long year; do not allow conscious rectitude to make you prompt in suspicion and harsh in judgment. I think a good principle in life is when one meets with faults to treat them as one does cripples—turn one's eyes a little away from them unless one can be of use." He continues further to say that, paradoxical as it may seem, "some excellent qualities cannot exist without a disturbance of that harmony of character we desire—the muscles which give strength to the blacksmith's arm destroy the grace of line. There are

people who assert that Shakespeare was a drunkard; and though that is not to be admitted for a moment, it is probable so strong a nature sometimes kicked over the traces."

A dual nature often lays itself open to the accusation of being insincere. Easy is it to say people are insincere, but it is often a cheap way of avoiding taking the trouble to estimate a character fully and to acquire a just understanding of it. In Watts was a salient example of the possibility of two apparently irreconcilable characters being nevertheless combined in one nature. It would be equally unintelligent and unjust to assert that the high level of his better self was a fiction and a pretence quite incompatible with the less worthy side of his nature, as it would be untrue to say that all his actions and feelings were actuated by that higher self. Nature asserted the contrary. What may seem to our small human reasonings incompatible, wider and more comprehensive laws prove are compatible. Nature has proved the same in the case of many poets, and in those even greater than mere poets.

Watts had a skeleton in his cupboard, a scare that would possess his imagination, a morbid condition, probably resulting from his realising the incompatibilities existing in his dual nature, saddened originally by the melancholy Celtic temperament. From this unbearable, intangible scare he was ever flying. His will, his conscience, his genius asserted that it should not obtain the mastery; want of physical vitality, latent consciousness of certain weaknesses, shame for his own shortcomings, want of courage and strength to face certain facts, were ever threatening that it was about to secure a hold on him. But fly from it he would, whatever the retreat involved, and it was such retreats that determined many of the actions of his outward life. Speaking to me of one, he said, "I do not want

to do it, but it is a necessity," the necessity being to fly from the hound in pursuit; that scare, that dread, no tongue, no pen has ever been able to put into words, but with which certain of the finest-fibred temperaments are tortured —the madness of the sane!

To give reasons to himself for such scares, Watts could twist his mind into certain attitudes, and work his actions from the base of such attitudes, constructed to disguise even from himself his own nervousness. Discussing these intricacies with me, he would generally end by avowing the real impulse which drove him to take action. No amount of intricacies would deprive Watts of the desire to be sincere. His letters to the end of life are constantly harping on the depressed condition this dual nature produced. To "the peace which passeth all understanding" he never, I fear, attained. His psychic intuitions were not illumined by the inspiration of the Spirit, which can alone calm the fever of the nerves in those whose sensibilities are supersensitive. He never resigned his sense of responsibility into the hands of a higher Spirit; it never lifted off so as to allay the ever-straining ambition to improve, or the nervous dread that time was being lost. To the end his letters are full of anxieties—anxieties about money, anxieties about time slipping away without being duly utilised, depression at feeling no improvement was being made. But when it is remembered that the end came when Watts was eighty-seven, how wonderful it seems that that ever-frail physique should have retained enough vitality to feel so keenly such anxieties! Only one sentence in a letter written in the late autumn of the year before he died shows any extinguishing of the vital spark, when he writes that "everything must be crowded here,"[1] and he adds, "I am sick of the whole thing!"

[1] This refers to the moving of all his pictures from his London gallery to the newly-built one in Surrey.

"I am nothing! You will find I am nothing!" Yes, truly the Watts who manipulated with ingenuity his upward career, was "nothing" to the Watts whose imagination struck down so deep into the very core of our world's eternal truths.

Whatever miseries, however, were entailed by the want of health, a too highly strung normal condition, a difficult over-sensitive temperament, and a tormenting depreciation of self, Watts was in many ways to be much envied. Though he would often repeat that being the "poor creature I am," he had only at very rare intervals known the sensation of positive happiness, he had nevertheless a keen interest in many subjects which made him a delightful companion. He enjoyed the power and the inspirations of a master workman, the glory of a great gift, the imagination to conceive noble creations, and an eye and hand to give them a permanent form and colour; not least,—the moral strength and consistency through physical distress and difficulties, to put his shoulder to the wheel and prove himself worthy of nature's blessings. The higher the scale may go on one side, the lower it may dip on the other; but what treasures has the mounting secured for the world! The dual nature was assuredly ever left outside the studio doors. The sacred spark burst out as brightly as ever when he was nearer ninety than eighty, in the exquisite "Lilian," a thing executed in his latest, broadest manner, but as subtle in quality, as vibrating in beauty as were the "Choosing" and the "Ophelia" of forty years before, and inspired also, as these were, by the loveliness of a fair young girl; a marvellous example of the power retained not only for feeling so intensely at that great age his lifelong passion for beauty, but also the power fully to record it. As he had disciplined this passion for beauty by studying the supreme excellence of Pheidias and Titian, so he steadied his tender-hearted, super-sensitive

temperament, his ungovernable impulses, by directing his thoughts to the highest and widest principles of philanthropy, and by the most rigid self-training in the habits of his life. All the same the fire burnt below, and to the end would at times burst out, the poet-artist refusing to be overridden by the schoolmaster,—the sudden, uncertain impulses of the rebel leaping over the traces which controlled the humanitarian philanthropist. "I'm sick of the whole thing" embodies the one, the portrait of "Lilian" the other.

When Watts was seventy-one he achieved a miracle. It was also a crime! On principle he became dull, momentously and intentionally dull, positively prosy,—rising on stilts and starting monologues on stuff which had been used up over and over again—worn through and through. Happily this little game did not last long, and he returned in conversing to his own delightful, natural self. He had, I presume, made a futile effort to get personally into harmony with his theories. A futile attempt indeed for a temperament that was only consistent in ever being open to fresh impressions, and in presenting new surprises! In his essential nature there was a child-like reality of grace and charm, a reflex of an inner spiritual grace, which infused a greater sense of intrinsic goodness and innocence into the atmosphere of his presence than any mountings on to the highest camels of morality could ever have created!

RELIGION

Religion was a subject often discussed between Watts and myself. The strict evangelical teaching he had received when a child had left its indelible stamp on his nature. The remarkable side in his character, however, which led him

eventually to independence of thought and action in all transactions to the very end of his long life, resisted the control of any distinct creed in very early days.[1] No formalities of any Church appealed personally to Watts' feelings, but he often expressed his conviction of the absolute necessity of some form of religion for the masses.[2] Walter Bagehot used to say that it was one thing for a nature to throw off the forms of religion when the mind and nature of men were developed and matured, quite another for men never to have had the teaching and control of religion in childhood. We had yet to see the results of a people being brought up from infancy without any religion. Doubtless Watts' independence of thought might have run in very different grooves had he not had early religious training. During the four years he was in Italy he was not only in a Roman Catholic country, but the guest of Lady Holland, who was a Roman Catholic. Watts had very little sympathy with the Roman Church. Its definiteness alone, I think, would have alienated

[1] I say "eventually," because, though Watts so often would fall easily under the influence of others in whom he found sympathy, such influence was at times only skin deep. As soon as he felt that it touched, or tried to divert the current of his own individual views and actions, it would cease to have any effect on him, and he would show his resistance to it by a very decided course of independent action. In reading Lady Burne-Jones' life of her husband, the following sentence struck me as one which would have equally truly described, I think, Watts' attitude towards those who unduly tried to use their influence over him. "Up to a certain point it was always easy to take advantage of him (Burne-Jones). Press that advantage too far, however, and he was gone like a bird from the snare."

[2] In a long letter, which Watts wrote in 1886, comparing the work of a well-known writer to some little poems by Mrs. Edward Liddell, he says, "Though I have no critical faculty, for I am ignorant among the ignorant, I yet feel there is a waft of sweet air in them (the poems), *perhaps blowing through the church door;* but the feeling is very real," which the accomplished work of the celebrated writer he thought lacked. He was not against the Church, though personally he would not be bound to her decrees. He would say: "Let the Agnostics find something better than the Church before they attempt to demolish her. The indefinite teaching of the Agnostics will never keep the morals of the masses in order. They require a positive creed."

him from it.[1] Of any creed which preached the doctrine of eternal punishment he disapproved. He would often speak of this doctrine with indignation as one of the most perverted of human imaginings. That any human being should attribute such cruelty as this belief involved to the nature of the God we pretended to worship as a merciful and loving Father, was to Watts' mind an abomination, a cruelty, he would say, the thought of which no human beings imbued with natural affections would tolerate in relation to their own children. The chapter of the Bible he would often refer to as containing "*everything*," was the thirteenth of First Corinthians. "The Greatest Thing in the World," and other books by Henry Drummond which we read and discussed, appealed to him as much or more than any he had met with on religion. Yet I think Watts did not feel so definitely the sense of the reality of the spiritual life, that inspiration which alone unveils the mystery of the highest psychic experiences, as he did the sense of moral obligations, particularly those moral obligations which different classes of society are under one to another. He much denounced the tyranny of class prejudice as unchristian and unjust. Freedom for thought and investigation he claimed for all, and would often refer to what he called the short-sighted policy of the Roman Church, even from the lowest point of view, in having endeavoured to stifle progress in all directions. If only, he would say, it had accepted the onward movement of thought

[1] He wrote in a letter dated October 10, 1892, that certainly the Roman Catholics make their religion more conducive to pleasure than the Protestant sects, and that he found it interesting to watch the developements of the creed taking the direction of all that preceded it. The human mind, he writes, becomes fatigued by effort to grasp the purely spiritual, and seizes upon those doctrines and dogmas that permit it to fall back on the physical. "Mary," he adds, "is fast obscuring the figure of Christ; and many Roman Catholics ought to call themselves Marians, not Christians."

and scientific investigation as lawful and right, while still maintaining the spiritual guidance of men, the Church would have kept everything in its hands, and retained, indeed increased, its power. Watts had within his own nature a proof of the truth of the saying that you can often lead where you cannot drive. To try to stifle speculation was, he thought, the surest way of exciting a revolt of the intellect against any control whatever. His mind was tolerant, reasonable, and eminently sympathetic so long as no attempt was made to force an argument based on the inadequate lines of prejudice or custom. The idea that he was to believe or respect an assertion, merely because it had been stated by one the world considered an authority, made him at once rebel.

He had a certain amount of sympathy with "extreme people" as having freed themselves from conventional grooves of thought. One evening in 1886 he sent me in an account of Prince Krapotkin, a man, he thought, we should hear more of. He could not help feeling that these "extreme people" have an instinctive feeling about art which the *dilettanti* quite ignore. He remembered Mazzini having been brought to see him years before by a friend of his who was distressed by his entertaining the opinion that art had no value. Mazzini was brought to look at "Time and Oblivion," and immediately said he acknowledged the value of art of that kind. This opinion, Watts said, had, of course, no reference to the work from an artistic point of view, but from its character and aim.[1] He added that perhaps these "extreme people" might be the regenerators of art! Watts' mind was eminently serious. He felt deeply the responsibility

[1] The text painted along the top of the canvass, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor desire, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest," probably led Mazzini to feel the value of the aim in the work more than the actual design of the figures, splendid as this is.

that life entails on every human being—the necessity for each of us to make use of every talent, were nature's gifts ten, five, or one. Though so modest, he instinctively recognised he had been given ten or more than ten talents. In February, 1890, he writes, "Real work must not be done with the object of securing success. Everything that is good must be done for its own good sake as much as possible, without any thought of self mixing with the intention or operation. I don't know whether you have read anything of Count Tolstoi's? His writings are full of food for the mind, whether one goes all his length or not; a thoroughly earnest man, proving his earnestness in a thorough workmanlike (so to speak) manner, more a foe to shams than Carlyle himself, because self in him is a consciousness only in as far as the effort to extinguish it extends." Watts felt so much within him that burned to find an outlet in expression, and yet so much that hindered the outpouring. He often referred in his letters to the fear he has that he might appear selfish in following so exclusively his own life, but the difficulties that were constantly impeding the work he had set himself to do made it absolutely necessary for him to lead exclusively the life that was best for his work. The desire to work at the Arts of Peace on the same heroic lines as those that stimulate the patriotism and enthusiasm of the warrior, gave a fine aspiration as of religion to his labour. It was not religion, but most religious, though lacking the spirit of rest and contentment which the feeling of perfect trust that all *must* be well can alone inspire. Being a Celt, Watts could rest in unrest, in a chronic attitude of mind which was melancholy. The wholesome creed, "For every evil under the sun there is a remedy or there is none. If there is one, try and find it. If there is none, never mind it," seemed to carry with

it no practical moral bracing to Watts, though he would acknowledge its wisdom. His nervous condition, which included the scare of melancholy, was too tormenting for him to feel with Browning, "God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world." He felt that neither was all well with himself nor with the generality of the world. He maintained that the feeling of happiness was more a matter of health and of temperament than of circumstances. In a fit of great dejection in the autumn of 1886 he wrote, that the Fates had been most unkind to him, and that under other circumstances, not extravagant ones, he might have been very different; but he did not think he had a right to dwell upon this, as probably in his own actual self he would have been very little better. "The world is very much what we make it!" "No one but the fanatic is happy," he writes in another letter.

Watts could embroider the surface of life with many imaginings, many enthusiasms, many paradises—fancy bred; but nothing fully contented and satisfied him in the long run but reality—the truest truth that his intellect could seize and that his heart could acknowledge as real.

Those who are gifted with genius often puzzle the world. Their actions are considered inconsistent and unaccountable, and are only excused on the ground that they are the actions of geniuses. I think it is not generally realised how much the special illumination we call genius stands outside and apart from the rest of the mechanism of human brain and feeling. The poet and artist of genius feel, though perhaps only half consciously, that the gift they possess lies outside the conscious will; that it is an influx of rays which have some divine source, and though many may not trace these up to the highest divine spring, all worship them as favoured illuminations from a higher sphere, one removed from the

grossness, the materialism, the covetous selfishness of the world. Vanity may inflate their senses with an idea they are different from others, and therefore may be a law unto themselves; but in worshipping their genius they do not feel they are worshipping themselves or anything which belongs to them as individuals, but a something which is outside and better than themselves. The ordinary world looks on the man and his genius as parts of one and the same individuality, expecting rather an extra amount of virtue in the characters of those so gifted, whereas many artists work off what is best in them in their studios, on their pictures, or on their statues, leaving the remaining part of their nature an adaptable quantity. Their debt to duty is paid off by loyalty and industry in fulfilling the highest dictates of their genius, their natures are strung up to their finest vibrations in her service; a collapse in action often follows, for the genius of right living and of right thinking is not the inevitable accompaniment of genius for art or poetry. Though Watts felt the most earnest desire that his every thought and every action should be in tune with the best that was in him, he could not help his fullest strength flowing with the tide of his aspirations in art. Ordinary life was generally out of tune with his creative inspirations. By encouraging the habit of looking at the best side of every one and everything, he banished a certain amount of ugliness out of life, and created thereby that delightful atmosphere which environed his personality and bestowed pleasure and good on all his friends; but this did not free him from the danger of being ruthlessly awakened at times to the fact that neither things nor people were exactly like what he had chosen to imagine them. He ever desired to follow the teaching of his favourite chapter, the thirteenth of Corinthians, but impressions that were painful

he could not encounter. In theory, his charity was boundless, except where his indignation was aroused, and he raged against certain habits, such as gambling, racing, and despotic tyranny of any kind; but in practice he avoided most things that involved moral or mental distress or disturbance. "*Il faut payer pour tout!*" The sensitiveness that created many exquisite beauties in art was too cruelly wrought on by impressions that hurt him to make it possible for Watts to do otherwise than avoid them. He was, and no one knew it better than himself, what is called "a child of nature." All the self-discipline in the world could never eradicate the vividness with which impressions struck him, nor the power such impressions had over him.

Both to Watts and Leighton the beauty of nature was a religion in itself. These two great artists worshipped and studied nature with reverence and earnest devotion to the end of their lives, enlisting the best gifts in their possession into her service. In every sense Watts was elevated by his work. In the practice of his art he found a developement for all the most noble and distinguished instincts of his nature, and among these were undoubtedly innate religious instincts not solely traceable to early training. With a very subtle, though commanding, eloquence, has Leighton described the particular function of art in the address he gave to the Royal Academy students in 1881. I believe these words also describe very truly the views Watts took of his own vocation, which he regarded as little short of a sacred mission. I quote below these lines by Leighton, because I feel they cannot be too often quoted, especially at a time when any serious aspects or directions in art are by so many deemed to be out of place, the link between the wonderful creations in the world we live in and the spiritual aspirations in man being

ignored, truth in rendering the superficial aspect of objects being alone aimed at and studied.

"We have no cause for misgivings in regard to the continued vitality of the arts we follow, inasmuch as they have their roots in deep needs and undying instincts in our common nature; and I exhorted you to work on in unwavering faith that the day is not at hand when the expression of æsthetic emotion through the forms of art shall fail for lack of an answering echo in the hearts of men.

"Her duty is to awaken those sensations directly emotional and indirectly intellectual which can be communicated only through the sense of sight, to the delight of which she has primarily to minister. And the dignity of these sensations lies in this, that they are inseparably connected by associations of ideas with a range of perceptions and feelings of infinite variety and scope. They come fraught with dim complex memories of all the ever-shifting spectacle of inanimate creation, and of the more deeply stirring phenomena of life; of the storm and the lull, the splendour and the darkness of the outer world; of the storm and the lull, the splendour and the darkness of the changeful and the transitory lives of men. Nay, so closely overlaid is the simple æsthetic sensation with elements of ethic or intellectual emotion by these constant and manifold accretions of associated ideas, that it is difficult to conceive of it independently of this precious overgrowth.

"The most sensitively religious mind may indeed rest satisfied in the consciousness that it is not on the wings of abstract thought alone that we rise to the highest moods of contemplation or to the most chastened moral temper; and assuredly arts, which have for their chief task to reveal the inmost springs of beauty in the created world, to display all the pomp of the teeming earth and all the pageant of

those heavens, of which we are told that they declare the glory of God, are not the least eloquent witnesses to the might and to the majesty of the mysterious and eternal Fountain of all good things.

"And once again, I say, I would fain stamp this vital fact deeply in your minds. Believe me, whatever of dignity, whatever of strength we have within us, will dignify and will make strong the labour of our hands; whatever littleness degrades our spirit, will lessen them and drag them down. Whatever noble fire is in our hearts will burn also in our work; whatever purity is ours will chasten and exalt it; for as we are, so our work is, and what we sow in our lives, that, beyond a doubt, we shall reap for good or for ill in the strengthening or defacing of whatever gifts have fallen to our lot."

CHAPTER VI

SICKNESS, TRAVELS, AND OLD AGE

THERE are days that stand out in the memory as typical of seasons—perfect examples of certain moods in nature—certain climates in certain countries. Easter Day, April 25, 1886, in Somerset, was one of these—truly typical of the fine delicate beauty of our best English spring days, and all the world over nothing can be found more lovely! I walked two miles along the road to church—metal tongues clanging out their peals from a dozen or more belfries in the old Henry VII. churches, of the beautiful towers rising near and far over the moors and the undulating ground. Sunlight was twinkling in the dewy mist, soft moist colour seemed everywhere floating in the air and on the fields away to the azure hills folding all around the landscape against the veiled line of the horizon. All nature was sweet, fresh, and clean to greet Persephone. The larks rose over the purple soil up into the sunshine, trilling their Easter song in an ecstasy of joy. The hawthorn hedges bristling over with bright vivid points,—little clusters of serrated leaves still folded tight,—made an avenue of emerald green sunlight on either side of the road; all was so rural, and as the poets would fain have it! The joy of that walk, the gratitude for feeling the joy, makes a brilliant jewel bead in the rosary of past days.

And poor Watts was in London, working away after long illness! The same day I wrote to him, describing to

him all I saw of beauty—all I felt of joy. He answered: "Tuesday—Sunrise—Melbury Road. I am pleased in your pleasure! The country must indeed be beautiful, and I understand its influence. Such grace and apparent beneficence should indeed awaken a corresponding something in the mind of the beholder. How nice it would be if the budding loveliness of the young summer inspired generally a like tenderness in humanity! If the hardness of feeling, which I suppose must close round the sensibility that has been knocked about by disappointment and shrivelled by the bleakness of insincerity (which drives the sap of our better feelings inwards), how nice if the more child-like trust and tendency to enjoy could be renewed, and all our best and most natural nature could come out with renewed buds of Hope and Faith. . . ." Further on in the same letter he writes of his own occupations. He had been to the Academy, and thought that Leighton would carry off the honours of the year with his ceiling, which looked better than it did in his studio, and his statues.[1] He fancied Burne-Jones hardly looked so well in the Academy as he would have in the Grosvenor . . . Richmond the other day to have found "Time, Death, and Judgment" *enormously* improved; Watts thought it was, but did not dare to think it so greatly better, as Richmond had seemed to find it. "You do not talk of illness, so that is well. . . . I have Blanche's baby with me for a short time, and this is a real delight to me. I love babies, and young things. I am not sure the feeling does not go shading off with the mental and physical changes which abominable Time persists in bringing.[2] I don't think I care much for intellect; perhaps

[1] "The Sluggard" and "Needless Alarms."

[2] I had felt for some time that age was telling on Watts. In the beginning of the year 1886 he writes, "I put the matter as far away as I can, for the thought

because I haven't enough to enable me to appreciate it in others. What a day was yesterday, for the holiday people! I am always pleased when they are lucky. . . ." He ends his letters by saying that his picture "Hope," if it was not destroyed in the Grosvenor, promised to be popular. He might have sold it in his studio—"Think of that!" A little later Watts wrote that he had had an offer of £1500 for the "Hope," but that he would keep faith with himself and not sell it, as he intended it as a gift to the nation. However, eventually, his assistant, Cecil Schott, made an excellent replica of the picture in the studio, which Watts worked on, and the original was sold. Watts got ill again in the autumn of 1886, and wrote that, "Bond[1] (his doctor) did not give him any hope of being better till the weather changed." He wrote asking me if I thought "Hope" looked as well in the Gallery as in the studio. I had suggested to him that something appeared to me wrong in the arm of the figure, and he answers: "You may be right, but it is not foreshortened, as the body leans a little the other way. I have done little in the scribbling way, feeling very stupid. A cough always makes me feel too dull for anything." He said, further, he had been working a little on the red chalk drawing of—what can she be called? "The Daughter of Duty and Introspection" (afterwards named "The Dweller in the Innermost"), and thought he might send it to one of the exhibitions, or it might do for Whitechapel.

how little I have done here is very painful to me, but facts are stubborn things, and however much I may shut my eyes to it, the fact remains that somewhat later than this time next year I shall be 70! I have no elasticity of spirit." The more age told on him the more Watts seemed to care for children and young things. In August 1895 in a letter he says, "If you write again tell me something about the future generation, Guy!" (our boy).

[1] Doctor Bond was the father of "Pretty Lucy Bond," one of the most charming portraits of children Watts ever painted.

HEAD OF AN OLD MAN

Five Minutes' Study in Pastels by G. F. Watts

It was during this year he talked to me of the idea he had of marrying, but wrote in the summer that he wished it to be kept a great secret; a very great secret! and one that was to remain so for a time. It was a matter which he desired no one should know anything about just then, as he wished to avoid astonishments, &c.—"so a word to the wise!" This was one of the many instances where Watts created the very situation he wished to avoid, for naturally secrets are the things which create curiosity and astonishment when sooner or later they must be disclosed. Not long after I asked Watts' permission to tell certain persons, particularly my sister, Mrs. Greg, and gradually he became less shy on the subject, and told "the very great secret" to several of his own friends.

In the autumn of the same year, Watts and I became much interested in pastels. Our mutual friend, Miss Ida Verner, had been using them with success. Some of Watts' oil pictures had been mistaken by foreign critics for pastel work. He was eager to try the material and see what effect he could produce with the real thing. I find a note—"They have sent my pastels but no paper. Will you lend me a sheet?" An idea had come to me while talking with him that the flock paper used for walls would make a good ground for pastels, and accordingly I had ordered a roll of a dark red colour in order to make the experiment. I took a piece of this in to him. He was in his little sitting-room, not being well enough to go into his colder studio. Without a moment's delay he seized his box of pastels which were near him, and while I was still standing, he drew in the head of an old man on the flock paper in less than five minutes. I have it before me now, for it was so cleverly and dexterously drawn I had it at once put into a frame. It is a thousand

pities that no fully satisfactory manner has been invented to set pastels. What a splendid method it would have proved to Watts had this been the case. Pastel models itself. In this head, which took him but moments to draw, there are suggestions of form and modelling, free and yet delicate, of a quality which neither oil nor water-colour can produce without the labour which just takes off the bloom of spontaneity. Sargent can put on vital touches in oil pigment which are alive with a sense of freshness; he can draw in paint as no one else can, but it is the genius of Sargent, and not the material he uses to which such success should chiefly be credited. Such vitality of touch in oil-painting is also the result of much physical vigour—and this Watts was deficient in. But from work in pastel, a pigment so much more flexible and easy to manipulate, what could not the impetuosity of his passion for beauty, and subtle feeling for form, have secured for us! "Sic Transit," which was finished that year, has in its texture much of the quality of pastel, with the suggestion of more weight and solemnity. Perhaps I am prejudiced in my unbounded admiration for this picture. The stupendous tragedy of its effect I feel to be as much owing to the grandeur of the texture of the painting as to the profound sadness of the conception, and the technique which secured this texture is so spontaneous and unlaboured, that I feel it, in its own line, to be the greatest triumph of Watts' achievements. "Love and Death," "Time, Death, and Judgment," and the large "Court of Death," were all commenced before Watts had acquired ease and experience in his latest method. I saw from day to day how the texture improved and acquired the fulness which they now possess, but I cannot lose the sense of the labour this fulness entailed. "Sic Transit," on the contrary, is

so magnificently simple—yet containing all the tragedy, the mystery, the last word that can be said on the awful theme, and in an expression of art which is as solemn as the theme itself. Almost equal to "Sic Transit" are the small canvasses of "The Court of Death," and the Riders on the White, Red, Black, and Pale Horses.

It was at this time I became the lucky possessor of "Brynhildr." Watts was anxious about money, and the great expense his immediate future would entail. He had arranged to go to Egypt for the winter. He wanted to sell some pictures. I asked him if he would sell the "Brynhildr," and for what price. After he had mentioned the sum I begged him to let me have the refusal of it. He said he would like to give it to me; but, in the face of the additional expenses he had at that time, I was certainly not prepared to let him do this. I sent him the cheque, and, in acknowledging it, he writes a long and very characteristic letter. He did not like taking it, it was "a very uncomfortable proceeding," but considering all the fresh expenses entailed upon him he felt he ought not to refuse it. As Watts for the last thirty years confided his money anxieties to me, I can speak with authority on a matter about which erroneous impressions have got about. The false assumption that Watts had no anxieties with respect to money puts many of his actions in a very false light. He always expressed a wish to do kind, generous things, but he had very seldom the money to carry out these wishes. As I have said before, the magnificent gifts of pictures to his nation entered into quite a different category from that in which his other expenses were placed. It is quite certain that no government would have bought the pictures at the time when Watts gave them to the nation. It was long enough before they were even appreciated

by the general public. It was only by giving certain of his most important works to the nation that Watts could carry out the aim he had in painting them, namely, to try to raise the art of his country by placing it on the same level as that on which the best literature and music stand; but while doing this he also had to live, and therefore selling other pictures was a necessity to him. Had Watts been a rich man, free from money anxieties, the gifts he made to his nation would have meant far less in generosity. What is it to the millionaire to give thousands, the parting from which never touches his personal life nor weights his mind with a moment's anxiety?

He had asked me in the previous spring to get up a class in his iron studio for an artist who had assisted him, but for whom he had not then any work.[1] Watts would call this artist "the Divine," because of his absolute convictions, and the immovability of his mind regarding these convictions. Watts always expressed a conviction that the knowledge of anatomy which "the Divine" possessed was greater than that of Michael Angelo, and considered he had sounded the true principles of form more thoroughly and satisfactorily than had any artist Watts had ever either known or read of. I formed a class of my personal friends, and Mr. Moore engaged models for us to study from, on the principles Watts held as to the way models should be used. For the quick sketches I made from them I used pastel on the red flock paper, which pleased Watts very much. His approval showed me what sympathy he had with the effects the material produced. What exquisite things from his hand might have been produced had the secret been

[1] Mr. Henry Moore, the author of a work which Watts believed would be of the greatest value to students, entitled "Analysis of Drawing, Painting, and Composing."

mastered of setting the pastel without endangering or destroying its beautiful quality. Very soon, however, Watts and the pastels had to go upstairs. He was very unwell, felt "the poorest of poor creatures," he wrote. His doctors were anxious he should get to a warm climate, but could not even allow him out of his room. He wrote that a python had caught hold of him, and he could not get well! He had always had a great desire to visit Egypt. One of the books we had read together, with most interest, had been Villiers Stuart's book on it, and to Egypt he meant to go as soon as he might travel. Letters and notes came in most days—pleasant ones about the lady he was about to marry. He said he was certain that we should become "great friends," as we had "the same interests and tastes." "You will perhaps find her a little shy and reserved, but I don't think you will have any difficulty. We are both to have perfect confidence and freedom, and none of my habits are to be changed." At last he was well enough to move, and asks me to run in to see him before he started to Epsom to be married, but *not* to say good-bye, adding that if there was anything he disliked more than another it was saying *anything like* good-bye—"a thing so unnecessary between real friends! and fit only for acquaintances." I found him better, but nervous and anxious to get abroad. He returned to Little Holland House the same day that he was married, and the next morning the accustomed little envelope appeared asking me to go in to see him. He was still coughing, but full of hope as to the wonders that the Egyptian climate was to perform, feeling, however, great dread of the Bay of Biscay! Travelling had always been a real ordeal to Watts. The unaccustomed was ever a "bogey" to him. Still the hope that he would regain

health and strength for his work was uppermost. I saw him and his wife two or three times before they started, but unfortunately had to go to Norfolk the day before the actual departure. Mr. Barrington's uncle, the Bishop of Norwich, was holding the Confirmation Service at King's Lynn, and our boy was to be confirmed by him, so we could not actually see Watts off. He had been anxious to see us on that last day, sending in several times to know if we had not returned. We found, when we did so, a note from him asking Mr. Barrington to help him with reference to some alterations which were going to be made in his house during his absence abroad. He also asked Mr. Barrington to confer with the architect, Mr. Aitchison, and Lord Ilchester's agents, as he had done with reference to the building of the gallery. He had previously asked me to superintend the copying in the iron studio of five of his most important pictures by Cecil Schott for Canon Barnett's Church in Whitechapel. These copies were carried out with great industry and ability by the young artist during the months when Watts was abroad. I would go in once or twice a day to give him the benefit of a fresh eye on his work.

Watts seemed in rather better health when he started, but a letter came from Malta saying he was there till the next boat. He had not quite thrown off the attack before going away, and the draughts on board had brought everything back again; so, though he had had an especially fine passage till past "*the dreaded bay*," he was wretchedly unwell, and the doctor on the ship advised his stopping at Malta. He hoped to get off by the next boat. He had "a gentle and wise companionship which makes things easier." Further on he speaks of Cecil Schott, whom he asked me to look after while he was away; and added that he thought he was a very unusual specimen . . . quite remarkable, and believes it may be for me a

"OH! WHO WILL O'ER THE DOWNS SO FREE"

After Painting by G. F. Watts

pleasure to watch and aid the developement of artistic and moral qualities of which Watts thought very highly. The next letter is dated "January 1, 1887.—At the foot of the Great Pyramid." They were in a place which had not been open for, he should think, thirty years, "and the fleas have had it all their own way." How much will be left of them he did not even dare to think; however, it was worth a great deal to see the Pyramid and Sphinx under all states of atmospheric effect. He was not at all disappointed. The Sphinx, especially, he thought wonderful in its calm serenity. He did not remember any picture that had at all rendered its impressiveness. (Watts himself made a fine study of it by night.) The only thing that disappointed him in Egypt, he wrote, was the climate! Fogs in the morning were more than common, and he had been there five days and it had rained twice, and now later in Cairo and at the Pyramids he had had only one fine morning! Cold mornings and evenings he had been prepared for, but not for mornings like those sometimes seen at the seaside in England. He thought the climate of Malta must be far the best in the world. . . . He found more and more that he never could have travelled alone, and how admirable a companion he had secured. He ended his letter by New Year's greetings, and by asking me to manage to secure for Mr. Fairfax Murray a commission for a portrait of a child Watts had been asked to paint. From Assouan he wrote that he found the results of seeing and hearing and thinking came out very slowly with him. So much had been seen. Many things had delighted him, some surprised him, some disappointed him. "Of the first, the sunsets and the temples; of the second, the familiarity of the birds; and of the third, the climate." He had not long got over his cough and bronchial tendency. The sailors were constantly coughing! and fogs were common at Cairo. He was certain

this had been a very ticklish time with him, and though no doubt he ought to have been abroad occasionally, it was equally certain, he repeated, he never could have travelled alone. "My physical condition makes my state resemble an ancient beleaguered city—sometimes the slingers assail it, sometimes the archers, sometimes it is battered by catapults and rams; bronchitis, bile, eczema, or lumbago! Luckily they don't come all together, or I might not be able to hold out. The Signora has had a pretty bad time with me, but for the last ten days I have been a different creature, and perhaps a new leaf has been turned." He wrote he was delighted by Gilbert's triumphal election as an R.A. That was right. . . . He had been living for the last six weeks among Egyptian sailors on board the Nile boat, and had seen naked feet and legs as familiarly as naked noses, and had examined and studied them very carefully. Gilbert was wrong, he said, about his feet, certainly wrong. Burne-Jones, he thought, had divined the colour and some of the character of Egypt wonderfully! in fact he was the only one who had given us Egypt, but this from only one point of view. As a rule the torso and arms of the men were splendid! the pectoral as strong as Watts himself was in the habit of making it! and the clavicle superb like the Oxford bust.[1] "They fall off in the article of legs." He constantly wished for Walter Crane—"what things he would make!" Watts said he himself had only made twopenny-halfpenny scribbles, worse than anatomists! things never to be shown! What builders the ancient Egyptians were! Temples with a frontage of nearly a mile, and columns that look as if intended to support the sky! Though he had his face turned

[1] Watts had told me that when this bust was excavated from a number of fragments in the cellars of the Museum at Oxford, he perceived at once the extraordinary beauty of it. He believed it to be a portrait, and we settled it must have been that of Aspasia. His pictures, "The Wife of Pygmalion," and "Iris," were of course painted adaptations from this bust

homeward, he would have to defer as long as possible getting back into the cold and damp, alas! His letters had failed him almost entirely, and he knew next to nothing about what had been going on. He was getting anxious about many things. He repeated the opinion that Burne-Jones had divined Egypt, and spoke of Holman Hunt. "Gustave Doré has in some of his illustrations rendered much of its desolation, I think, also divining." Watts had been above the first cataract, which was not a cataract at all, but a mass of black and granite rocks among which the river rushes. The rocks, or rather astonishing confusion of enormous stones on both sides as well as in the middle of the river, had reminded him of Doré every instant.[1] Notwithstanding Watts' impatience to get back, he perceived the necessity of hovering outside the cold till prudence gave him leave. If the change did for him what was possible, he hoped to prove that the time and expense had been well employed. He wrote that he wished I could see the boatmen, about ten of them, "of every shade of colour from copper to ebony, wearing *drapery*, after which European clothes inspire disgust!"

On March 10th he wrote, "Still on the Nile," and that he was in a very bad temper. The wind, which would have suited going up and have saved him no end of time, would not blow then, but now, wanting for many reasons to get back, and having long exceeded the allotted time, it persisted in blowing dead against them, making the Nile into a muddy sea, and he was losing "time and money and temper." He hoped to be turning homeward, but still dreaded the climate. Even there the bronchial tendency was always cropping up. He was going to try some baths near Cairo, and had, from all

[1] I remember Rossetti speaking of Gustave Doré also in appreciative terms, and saying what nonsense it was for people to scorn his work, as was the habit with some who could not *approach* him!

he heard, great hopes—"but I do not expect to be made new." He was satisfied that Egypt was the place for a young student. He had fallen in with Hamilton Aïdé, and had talked to him about sending students out to Egypt. He hoped that the subject might be taken up again! With reference to this idea he had tried to interest Hamilton Aïdé in "Little Schott." No one, he said, should come out to Egypt expecting a perfect climate. On the 11th of March, and on the river some fifty miles from Cairo, they were in a thick fog, and the deck of the boat was as wet as if there had been heavy rain. . . . He did not yet know how much of a new lease of health he might reckon upon; still the old alternating eczema, cough, lumbago, colds, &c. He hoped to be up to some better work, but time would show. If he was not better it would not be for want of care and nursing, with change of air thrown in. As far as improvement in "*sight*" of nature went, he thought that he certainly had gained, but whether anything would come of it was another matter.

From Cairo he wrote, that the doctor recommended the baths at Helwan, and if rooms were to be got he would stay there a fortnight or three weeks, which he did. Then he went to Constantinople, where he arrived on "a horrible morning it would have been in any place." He had caught a cold, was rather miserable, and did not admire the place. Thence he went to Athens, where he had to remain a little time "as I want the sun, which *does shine here*, to shake a cold out of me." The beauty of the scenery in Greece made him regret that Turner never saw it, and wondered that artists of the present day did not seem "to care for what Nature does in her most divine moods," especially as much that threw him into an ecstasy of delight was often to be seen in Scotland, "what Scotch

painters mean by for ever reproducing mist?"[1] He wrote of Millais, and the notices he had seen in *The Times* on the Grosvenor Gallery and the Royal Academy. "I expect to see a good deal in your studio, and I hope soon, as our faces are really set homewards now." They should have been actually on their journey; but Nature did not seem inclined to do as much for him as he had hoped, "and I am apparently just as liable to colds and their consequences as ever —a little disappointment!" He did not see in the future that vista of work done he thought might have been possible, "but one can only do what one can." I must not expect, he wrote, to see studies or sketches. He could not make sketches, but thought if he should have any working time still in front of him something might come out of the wealth spread—and so profusely—before him. He thought he had filled his mental pockets, but was not sure that the material was sufficiently strong to retain what had been housed into them. However, he thought he had appreciated, and that was something. Egypt and Greece had been two divine books open to him, and he believed that he had been able to read them, at least in some degree. He pressed me, if I had an opportunity, to see Egypt. He did not really think that the human structure was to be seen anywhere else, nor could any *costume* at all vie with the ever-changing and everlasting charm of drapery, real drapery. This had made Egypt, independently of other interests by no means overlooked, a sort of paradise to the eye. "Go and see it when you can," he repeats.

[1] Watts was forgetting those matchless sketches of Greece by Leighton, for which he had so intense an admiration. Leighton would tell me that he thought that in the Western Highlands the most beautiful sights in the world were to be seen. With as exquisite outlines as you get in Greece, you have the moisture in the air, which likewise gives perfection of colour. He once told me that the most beautiful scene he had ever seen on this earth was one evening at sunset when he was approaching the Island of Skye by sea from the south.

On his return home Watts was more eager than ever to get through much work, but says in a note I find that though he seems to be always working, nothing seems to be done. However he was able to labour on till it was time again to think of flying from the fogs and cold of a London winter. He was so much impressed by the Malta climate, having there for the first time thrown off the worst of his long malady, that he settled to go there again, and started full of hope, thinking to get a winter of work in sunshine and warmth. He took the Villa Micallef at Sliema. From there he wrote lengthily on family matters, and congratulated me on certain things, exaggerating as usual the value of my achievements, saying he envied me for many reasons. He went into his expenses and income, regretting his want of means. The cost of sculptor's studio and work left but a very small income to live in England. However he had determined so far to change his plans as to paint a few things for money, if they presented themselves to be not out of harmony with the more important direction of his objects ("not portraits; those I cannot for any purpose undertake"); but a few things occasionally which may sell, in order to create a little fund to be usefully applied. He could not say he had done much, but he thought he had got a better view of the beautiful—that was something. He begged me earnestly not to be afraid of finding my work easy. He wished he found his so. He would rejoice in so pleasant a state of things. He did not think real masters found all they did good for nothing. It was not possible, nor did good work indicate any such heart-burnings. "Keep great principles in your mind and before your eye, and rejoice in being able to rejoice." In the same letter he wrote interestingly of Walter Crane. He did not think one could think too extravagantly upon the serious conditions of modern life, but it was necessary to

work in concert with others in order to move any great weight, which concert could not be brought about by too great an expansion of individual sensations. The more we felt the more we should be able to impress others, and the less necessary would be violence. He did not know what was going on, but was always dreading change, fearing that things must become worse before *the better forced* itself forwards as a necessity. He sees better what might be done than how to do it. He was thinking about art; for he writes anything else was for him, alas! quite out of any possibility; but he did not like going out of the world without having done a man's work in some worthy direction. This feeling was growing upon him, and added, he could have felt envious of Leighton and every one who had physical and intellectual vigour, but he must not hope for increase of either at his time of life. One thing he wished to impress upon me, viz. to do the best one possibly can; one must have not only interest in one's work, but satisfaction. While quick to perceive defects, we should be alive to success. "If we do not know when we do well, I am sure we cannot estimate truly our failure, even if it were only because we shall not know perfectly in what the failure consists." Very shortly after receiving this letter a telegram came saying Watts was seriously ill. We telegraphed our sympathy, and another arrived. The case seemed hopeless. Quite suddenly one morning he had fallen down senseless. He got better and then ill again. As soon as he could be removed the doctor ordered him at once to leave Malta. He wrote from Naples that everything had gone wrong, and all his "expectations come to naught—a terrible expense of health and time and money." He was glad that things had gone well with me, and looked forward to "great results." He said Naples was a lovely place, but the weather had done its

best to spoil everything. The oldest inhabitants said they never had recollected anything so bad. He was to go by boat the next day to Marseilles, and the look-out was by no means reassuring, very wet and very cold. He dreaded the passage, he dreaded staying at Naples more. Then he wrote of art matters. He longed to see Richmond's pictures, and thought he would go straight ahead now, and wondered what he had done about the Grosvenor. Watts hoped that there was no real attempt being made to establish a new gallery.[1] He was sure there were enough, and more than enough, already. Respecting Leighton's picture, the "Captive Andromache," which he heard would be finished in time for the R.A., Watts wrote, "He is a wonderful man. I should like to know whether it is in your opinion what it promised to be—his best picture. It is certainly one of the most important." He wanted to know about the probabilities of the forthcoming R.A., and especially what Mrs. de Morgan had been doing. He wished he had his time, or a good lump of working time to come, for he had been so much impressed with the beauty of natural effects in the South. He felt that the early Italians had been on the best road. Though he couldn't wish that Titian or Tintoret had done other than they did, still he considered facility fatal to the tranquil earnestness that finds and reproduces the very best. The gospel of beauty should be preached to all the young. The art which did not acknowledge serene beauty as a shrine worthy of worship might astonish and succeed, but it would not maintain a first place in future estimation. He wrote that I must forgive him for a stupid letter, but that he was feeling more than stupid. Subsequently, in a

[1] It was at this time that Sir Coutts Lindsay's secretaries were leaving him and trying to establish another Gallery, which ended in a company being formed to build the New Gallery.

letter dated March 13, 1888, from Mentone, he wrote that the life since Malta, and the last eight weeks there, had been such as could not be passed again. What with doctors' bills, sick nurse, boats, rails, and, worse than all, hotels, he could not go through it again without mental and material ruin. "However, most things come to an end." From Mentone he wrote most lengthily, and I think wisely, of the split between the Grosvenor Gallery and the secretaries, which resulted in the New Gallery being built. He wished to have nothing to do with exhibitions, especially at that moment, nor "to be bothered with considerations connected with them." He regretted the new enterprise entered into, and did not wish to connect himself with any clique. As regarded artistic action, not personal, he would always go with Burne-Jones, as he believed he had always been absolutely true to artistic principles, and he believed absolutely in Burne-Jones' future place. "I always looked at things, as you know, from two points of view—the far past and the far future. The squabble was trivial, but the principle was important. I think I shall not be denied the right of protest against Mammon worship!" He then went minutely into the subject of the discussion, ending by regretting the public scandal of the split, and the action of rushing into print and screaming to the public about what the public cares nothing for. There was nothing the public understood so well as making money. As he said before, upon principle he took the opposite view. One of Watts' most favourite sayings were the words he inscribed on the curtain which hangs behind the shrouded figure in the picture "Sic Transit Gloria Mundi," "What I spent I had, what I saved I lost, what I gave I have." He had ever been impressed with the absolute senselessness of attaching value to money as money, and of the vulgarity of mind which attached value to people

simply because they were possessors of money, the sole worth and distinction of the rich lying in the use they made of their possession. He did not go so far as Ruskin, who condemned taking any interest for money, but thought, on the contrary, if one hired money it should be paid for as anything else that is hired; but he thought the sort of religion percentage had become in modern times a very melancholy thing indeed, taking the place, as it certainly had, of almost every other incentive, excepting in rare cases, such, for example, as Gordon. He knew no one who was not consciously, or unconsciously, impressed by it, "and this I abhor upon principle." He would not, however, identify himself with anything that had not a wide public importance. He had reached the age of seventy-one, and was obliged to acknowledge to himself that he was an old man. What time he had left must not be given to squabbles more or less trivial. He ended the letter by saying he was so glad I was seeing so much of Leighton—a man "to see as much as you can of." Judging from my own personal experience, Watts spoke of no one with so much admiration as he did of Leighton. When interviewing Leighton's biographer, he said he wished it to be recorded that he, Watts, thought Leighton's character the most beautiful he had ever known. In another letter from Mentone (written in bed when suffering from a bad cold), referring to the death of a relative of my family whom he had been seeing there, he adds that few were more impressed with the sense of the inevitable and possible nearness of death than he was, and yet when it was at all sudden it was always a shock. He supposed that I was back and at work. "How I long to be doing so in my studio now it is almost light enough for work at five o'clock! I long, too, to know and see what has been done. I am greatly pleased to hear such good accounts about Guy."

Thereupon he enters on the subject of hunting. Our son had been hunting. Watts had never denied the brutal side of the chase, and could safely say he had never failed to have a thorough dislike and distaste for that one side of it ; but, on the other hand, he had felt, and did feel, very strongly, the necessity of keeping up certain qualities and emulations without which the human animal is very one-sided. The physical health and activity, which cannot be kept up in a country like England, where there are no mountains to climb, without a stronger inducement than exercise for itself can afford, was of immeasurable importance, not only on account of the race, but for the individuals who do most for the highest portion of the nation—the intellectual! Shelley and Rossetti might, with different physical habits, have had more of Shakespeare's naturalness without losing their spontaneity —who knows? Man was but an animal, though so marvellously gifted. Darwin's life had brought into relief a fact of the highest importance, not unknown or unacknowledged, but in its degree almost incredible, namely, how much the balance may be lost by constant weight being thrown into one scale. A lover of music and poetry, at the end, by for ever exercising his mind in the direction of investigation, once lost his pleasure in music and came to find Shakespeare a bore! "Preserve us from too much knowledge." He was doing a little work, but, he writes, rather preparation than anything else, and was sending a pastel sketch home for exhibition "if it should be worthy—doubtful! especially as I expect by the time it arrives it will be but a film of powder." He referred to a speech made at a dinner, in which it was asserted that art should not be considered a religious cult, nor that it had anything to do with it. The speech was generally applauded. Watts said that he should never send any of his work to a place managed by one holding such

views. In a subsequent letter from Aix-les-Bains, he wrote enthusiastically of Burne-Jones, whose pictures in the New Gallery I had described to him in a letter. Watts wished to exhibit with Burne-Jones, but said he had no further connection with the New Gallery. There were certain affinities, he felt, between his own work and Burne-Jones' art, "not, I am afraid, in pictorial achievement, but in earnest determination to do the best that is possible." He believed that the future would place Burne-Jones above everybody. "It is great art, and he works like a great artist." He wished to include the "Angel and Child" he had painted among the pictures for the nation, though the unexpected strain that year made his limitation of income a source of anxiety. Therefore he would make a replica of the "Angel of Death," which he would sell, and promised a friend of mine, who had wished to purchase the original picture, the refusal of it. He expressed great anxiety to get to any work he could do. He was glad we were satisfied about Guy (our son). "Pray let him grow up strong and manly, not a brute!" but he suspected that in the times that were coming, we should want men rather than sentimentalists.

Watts had turned his back on the South for the last time. He realised that no more experiments must be made. At his age he could be no traveller. He brought home with him the "Naples" which he worked on during the summer, a beautiful thing which was bought by our friend the late Mr. Thompson Yates, who lent it for exhibition during many months at Leighton House, and a "View of St. Agnese from Mentone." The next winter Watts tried Brighton. He looked fairly well when I saw him there in the autumn, but he was taken ill shortly after, and wrote later that he had been in bed nine weeks, and had had a hospital nurse for eight weeks. He was afraid that I and all his friends would be disappointed

by the little he would have to show, "but the fact must be accepted now that I am really an old man, and shall have to take things quietly." Brighton was not tried again, but he went the next winter to stay with friends in Surrey. In the winter and spring of 1891 there was illness in my family of the most anxious and serious kind. Watts was full of sympathy and writes much on the subject, many letters from his bed, for he also was ill. After the worst of the illness was over with us, he wrote hoping all would soon be well, and that I should get to work with eyes and mind widened by the long abstinence. He thought this was not a bad thing to happen—we become so much creatures of habit that it was no bad thing to be forced to become strangers to ourselves and our practice. At his age this could not be so productive of good as when younger, and the loss of as much time as had been cut away from him would be difficult, under the most favouring circumstances, to make up. He hoped, however, to get to work again the next week. In the previous winter, that of 1890 and 1891, while staying with his friends in Surrey, he wrote that he had done no painting, but had been making some red chalk drawings, and he thought some very beautiful qualities came out of this material. He advised me to make a few studies in it for a series I was painting.[1] He thought I should find it suggestive.

Watts' use of red chalk is well known. He produced peculiarly lovely effects in it. He carried out that very specially lovely quality of *bloom*, in which he is unrivalled in oil painting, in these red chalk studies. It is the combination of this quality in the surface with the solidity in the modelling of the form which creates the rare charm

[1] This was a series of designs I had made with short verses attached to them, called "Love in the Story of the Year," in which both Watts and Leighton had taken a kindly interest.

in them. Speaking of the little he had done, he wrote that he never remembered such a winter, and dreaded to think of the consequences. He believed the inevitable distress would hasten some difficulties and necessities for adjustment which have only been delayed. No doubt he was a pessimist, but he thought every one who reflected must see how dangers and difficulties crowded around us. It was hopeless for individuals of an ordinary kind and in an ordinary position to strike against them, but perhaps all of us could do something, however little, and the less we thought about ourselves and the more about the responsibilities of mere existence, the better for us individually and for all collectively.

The conditions in which Watts normally found himself were such as made it almost a necessity for him to think about himself. The tasks he had set himself to achieve were lengthy. Even under the most favourable circumstances he could hardly hope to accomplish them at his age; but when, as he constantly wrote, weeks and months in every year were wasted by being laid up, how was he to achieve them? It was only through the greatest care and good nursing—and this he received—he wrote, that he was there at all. He must be more than careful, but it was a bore to have so constantly to think about his body; but "I am the poorest of poor creatures!" He told me that friends were building him a house not far from their own, as the air in Surrey suited him, and little travelling was involved in going up and down from it to London. Watts possessed himself of this house later, and made of it his country home to the end of his life.

I had not, since Mr. Barrington's dangerous illness, been able to resume painting. Though the immediate anxiety as to the special illness was over, there were many claims owing to

other illnesses which quite prevented my mind being sufficiently at peace to absorb itself in art. I have found it to be absolutely useless to attempt to paint unless able to absorb myself without interruption in the work. However, it seemed possible for me to write in any spare minutes I had, so forthwith I began my first story, "Lena's Picture." Watts became most kindly eagerly interested in it. He wrote many letters and notes referring to the book. How was the book getting on? He hoped I was at work on my book. The thing that really interested him was to hear about my book. He was delighted to get the good news that the book was coming out soon, finding, as ever, his delight in enthusiastic sympathy, even should it entail extravagant praise. As soon as "Lena's Picture" was done with, he expressed himself eager for more. He asked whether I was prompted to write any more? He hoped so. He hoped I would make painting and writing the objects of my life. He wished he had the gift for writing, as there were so many things he wished to say. Any one conversant with Watts' letters must, however, feel that he had a very distinct power of using words in writing which expressed his ideas with singular lucidity and originality.

In the spring of 1894, whilst Mr. Barrington and my son were on a visit to South Africa, I wrote "Helen's Ordeal," and in the next September I sent Watts a copy. He thanked me for the book, which he would, he wrote, of course read with great interest. He was most sincerely glad that the book had been approved. Everything seemed to be well with me, so the world was nice! After having read "Helen's Ordeal," he wrote in a kind strain about it. He thought there was a fresher air and clearer atmosphere than in my last, and it ended more satisfactorily, a very important thing, in his opinion. He wrote lengthily on the book and of

thoughts which it had suggested to him. Then he continued, saying he hoped I would go on writing, and write of artists, the lives and characters and aspirations of these not having been made use of by novelists often, as literary men, as a rule, cared little about art, a subject he said I was perfectly competent to speak about. He ended his letter by saying that having absolutely decided that he would paint no more portraits for money he was now painting several! He had become interested, he wrote, in the institution of the "Home Arts," and his reason for painting these portraits was to enable him to give it a little substantial aid. "I do not consider that in doing this I am departing from my forced determination, do you?" I certainly thought he was, though I was in no wise inclined to criticise adversely such a departure. In a subsequent letter, referring to his doing what he said he never would do again—painting portraits for money—he wrote he hardly thought any person would have made him do it for any private reason. He was not, however, after working quite sixty years, without anxiety about his own necessary expenses, and there were none that were not necessary! Now that he was better, he was painting on the second "Court of Death," which he hoped, if he lived so long, to finish by his eightieth birthday! He hoped there was something in it.

In February 1895 he read an article I wrote in *The Spectator* on our mutual friend, Mrs. Thornycroft, the sculptress. He wrote he thought my article "on dear Mrs. Thornycroft" was excellent. She had the element of a great character in a very unusual degree, and had on the whole a very prosperous life. He opened this letter after he had closed it, because, in reading another article in the same *Spectator*, he found it was said, or certainly implied, that gambling in itself was not immoral! How could Mr. Hutton, who was, he believed, a religious

PHOTOGRAPH OF G. F. WATTS

His Picture "The Court of Death" as background

I send you a Photograph
of myself under my big
picture done by Andrews
I think it really a fine thing Signor

man, allow such principles to be put forth in his paper! He continued in an excited strain. Would the Master in whom he (Mr. Hutton) believed (he will not say professes to believe because that would imply insincerity), say that any action or habit which was known to be often the cause of suicide, of forgery, of ruin, was not in itself immoral! On lower grounds, was it not immoral to throw away on reckless personal amusement means that might, *moderately* well employed, make the happiness and well-being of thousands? Was it not immoral to take without giving some equivalent?—this last, on the lowest grounds, was base and unmanly. If all this could not be put down by law, and perhaps it could not, here came in the function of the public press, the tone of which seemed, in its absence of appeal to any religious or moral principle, utterly bad and disgraceful! "If I had any words I would write—oh! for one who would write like a Hebrew! The only one who did so, I think, was dear John Ruskin—the only one who, while denouncing the bad, told us what we should do! It was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, alas!" In the same letter Watts wrote that he thought that he had been let off the grip of the fiend (influenza) "which runs riot in the house here," in consideration of nearly two months lost in London from illness, "but I feel very much as if 'the avenger of blood' were behind me, and I want to do so much!" I had seen, as long as I had known Watts, a tendency in him to allow certain subjects to become focalised as bugbears in his mind, and as his fits of nervous excitement, "not to say irritability" (to use his own words), increased with great age, his indignation at the evil of certain customs knew no bounds. He deprecated gambling and racing in the strongest terms. These were the subjects of letters he wrote when clearly

under such excitement. The most striking pictorial outcome of these abhorrences is the "Jonah," a work of inspiration.

In the autumn of 1893 he wrote in special anxiety about money, and wanted to sell some of his pictures, as he said he had lost a considerable part of his income. Several letters came on the subject, as friends of mine were likely purchasers. Before giving a list of the prices of those he wished to sell, he wrote that "The Ghost of a Ship" and its companion he was unwilling to part with, as they were reminiscences of a very delightful series of impressions which could never be his any more, as he should never see the South again. "A Reverie," a painting which he, in writing, called "the young girl with the Indian purple drapery and lapis lazuli background," was a favourite picture of his—one of the best things he thought he had ever painted or ever should paint, and which he should be very sorry to lose. However, that was the one chosen, and he wrote again thanking me for my good offices, but saying he was sorry to lose his picture. When Watts regretted losing a picture, it meant not so much parting with it himself as separating it from those which he meant, at his death, to belong to the nation as worthily representing his life's work. He would not part with several of his drawings also on this account. Watts was sufficiently human to desire that all his best work should be permanently appreciated, and therefore included in his splendid legacy to his country. I think, when considering the impulses which moved Watts' generous patriotism in reserving his life's best work as a legacy for his country,—impulses not the less beautiful because purely instinctive and only semi-conscious,—we must look further than his expressed intentions can take us. "If circumstances had permitted," he wrote very shortly before his death, "I would have done my work as Pictor Ignotus, leaving it

to say what it might when I should have done with it." Ideality—tenacity in living in ideas—is the salient feature in the Celtic nature. It is ideas which most powerfully incite the race to action; ideas which have absolutely nothing to do with material indulgences or necessities. In early life, stung by circumstances into a resolve to establish an individual and independent position, Watts conceived the idea which, far and beyond every other, became the deepest interest to him in his existence; the idea of devoting his life to his country by throwing his whole self into the something which he could leave as a legacy to that country. This idea became the paramount ruling passion of his life, becoming ingrained in his nature with that tenacity with which ideas can seize the nature of the Celt—a tenacity whose hold is far more inevitably clenching than that of mere loyalty to a conscious principle or intention. Watts' life became from early days concentrated in a secret passion for an idea to which he made everything else subservient. This attitude of nature was but a splendid developement of the same spurring force which inspires action in the lives of the Celtic peasants whom we found in the wild country in Brittany. Women would walk miles carrying heavy loads in order to gain two or three *sous*. The *sous* in themselves were not the inspiring motive for the painful endurance; but as something, however small, to add to the little fund accumulating to buy some piece of furniture to leave as an heirloom to their children and their children's children, the *sous* became precious and worth any amount of hardship and toil. It is the instinctive sense of a moral beauty existing in sacrificing ease in material conditions to an idea, which gives the touch of ideality to these poorest of peasants, and which alike inspired the genius of our great Celtic artist. When Watts became nervously, and apparently unreasonably

anxious about money, it was in no wise that he put any value on money as money, but because he dreaded lest financial difficulties might oblige him to infringe on the, to him, sacred ground of this fixed idea—the feeling that the smaller things in life might encroach upon the greater. Instinctively the Celt realises that idealism is higher than materialism; his essential needs are more satisfied by an indulgence in his sense of moral beauty than by the sense of physical comfort. It may be that his absorption in ideas arises from a paramount necessity to follow an innate instinct rather than from the conscious faith of an Eschylus propounded by the words so eternally true, "The good will prevail"; nevertheless such an absorption rules his nature from the higher, not from the lower plane, and finds its expression in sacrifice of the lower self. It is to such a sacrifice of materialistic interests to an idea that we owe the splendid legacy of work from Watts' hand. It was always a matter of surprise to him, he wrote, that his work was cared for, though he felt it would be most ungrateful to say and think that it was not a great deal more so than he had any right to expect, neither his subjects nor style having in them the elements of success. In the same letter he says he had had always a difficulty in selling his wares, and would never, if he could help it, take a penny unless for the purpose of distributing to the necessitous. As it was, he put by a percentage out of his receipts for that purpose. His instincts were outraged by asking money for what might *not* be money's worth. He wanted money very much, as he had lately been considerably impoverished, and appeals were being made to him in all directions under the impression that he was a wealthy man. This made him miserable, for he often felt that his own comforts were something taken away from others. The commercial side was always

extremely disagreeable to him, not from any contempt of work, as he considered the worthiest life was that which was earned by the money gained by honourable work, and was a life to be honoured. People must either be soldiers or agriculturists or traders, callings all equally honourable when honourably pursued, but Watts objected to a member of the aristocracy ("a position I admire and would like to belong to") and felt a contempt for a member of this class being a horse-dealer or a poulterer, which he was when he spent, or made, or lost his money on that most demoralising institution, the turf; or by selling the result of his butchery in a battue, a disgraceful and unmanly amusement. He was getting over illness when thus expressing these feelings, but strong-rooted dislike, indeed abhorrence of certain proceedings very generally indulged in, had become permanent with Watts, and though his expressions varied in intensity with his health and the condition of his nerves,—becoming especially drastic when personally he came in contact with disastrous results from such proceedings—his views and principles regarding them never altered.

A happier mood of Watts' nature evinced itself in the picture, "Faith, Hope, and Charity," painted when he was very old. In 1902, when we were looking together at it in his studio, he took great pleasure in describing the intention he had had in painting it, and especial delight in telling me that Mr. John Morley had appreciated and had understood it. His description of it recalled the letter written at "sunrise" sixteen years before on Easter Tuesday, 1886, when he said, in answer to my description of the walk I had taken to church two days before: "I am pleased in your pleasure! The country must indeed be beautiful, and I understand its influence. Such grace and apparent beneficence should indeed awaken a corresponding

something in the mind of the beholder." In this picture of "Faith, Hope, and Charity" he explained to me how he intended to convey the meaning that the belligerent element in Faith, as she had been conceived by the Churches, succumbs under the beneficence and loveliness in Nature, while Hope and Charity, in tune with the gentler influences of this Nature, guide her to the reviving spring of Truth where, unloosening her sword, she washes her blood-stained foot in its waters. He told me he particularly wished this picture included in those I was choosing at that time for the Leighton House exhibition, so that I might describe his idea to the people whom I took round the studios, especially to those belonging to the poorer classes. He repeated the wish to his man Thompson, who was to see to the removing of the pictures; but, unfortunately, when the time came, Watts wrote saying he thought he must work further on it before it was seen.

He was ever anxious to bring quieting thoughts and feelings to those in whom the harsh judgments in human creeds carry with them fear and alarms. His sense of justice was outraged by the idea that human beings should be punished for what they could not help. From being himself most sensitive to pain, physical and mental, he had a deep compassion for all kinds of suffering. He felt almost too much sympathy with it at times to allow him to dwell on it, realising, especially when he was very old, that any strong emotion led to conditions tending to the loss of his mental balance. The idea that any human organisations such as Churches should create terror in the simple and the semi-educated by scares of such retribution, which no action nor control of their thoughts could obviate, and thus create mental suffering which was one of the worst to bear, seemed an abomination to Watts. Through

his art he tried in every possible way to inspire feelings which should counteract the terror of inevitable Punishment and Death. He told me that the thought of Death had been present with him from his earliest days. Personal dread of it had concentrated itself more in the feeling of distress at possibly going out of this world before having given the message he felt entrusted to leave behind him, than in any special desire to live. In his case the pain of life had often weighed down the scales and left the side capable of feeling joy very empty. In talking together we always referred to Death as his "own familiar," and he dwelt often on the great desire he had of leading those who dreaded Death to regard it merely as an inevitable passing stage in the journey home.

In this picture of "Faith, Hope, and Charity," Nature —kind Mother Nature—was implied to be the beneficent healing influence to which humanity should resign its doubts, its fights and fears, assured that her beauty is a part of the divine essence transmitted to us as a blessing to be enjoyed through that echoing chord implanted in our own natures. This indeed, surely, must be ever the highest artists' creed! In early days Watts had painted "Humanity in the Lap of Earth."[1] Now, when near the end of the long journey, he seemed to turn more than ever to the belief in the power of the Great Mother to guard, nurture, and protect her children.

[1] See illustration.

CHAPTER VII

LEIGHTON

It is difficult, even at this distance of time, to estimate the sense of immense loss which Leighton's death caused to his friends. In the autumn of 1894 he went to Bayreuth, and it seemed that that extra exertion hastened the developement of the disease he died of. It was one long journey and back over and above the holiday travels he usually took every autumn, and the very interest of the performances, he told me while there, was a great strain upon him. When he left Bayreuth he travelled straight back to London and put on an additional spurt of working energy in order to finish the panel he was presenting to the Royal Exchange—"The Early Britons Bartering with the Phœnicians." He worked at it incessantly for three weeks, and then went, as was his wont, to Scotland and afterwards to Italy. Very soon after his return from Italy, in the early days of November, he was seized by the first attack of angina pectoris on reaching the Athenæum one evening after a concert at St. James's Hall. While in Italy in the following autumn, 1895, he wrote he was no better—"rather worse"—and on his return told us he had something like fifteen attacks of pain in the day. He had never disguised from us that he was steadily getting worse, yet the shock when the end really came seemed as great as if we had been totally unprepared.

Leighton took a unique place in his friends' affections,

His friendship gave a brighter colour to the whole of life. One felt twenty years younger after a good talk with him. He seemed to bring sunlight into the mind; a fair, wholesome, strengthening sunlight, that seemed to beam on you in order to do you good, mentally, morally, and physically.

Watts was in Surrey when all this came to an end. He wrote the same day: "This is dreadful!" Further on he said that the loss to the world was so great, that he almost felt ashamed to let his personal grief have so large a place. He had enjoyed an uninterrupted and affectionate friendship of five-and-forty years with Leighton. "I am glad you knew him so well, I am glad for any one who knew him. No one will ever know such another. Alas! alas! alas!" He ended by writing that, for the moment, he felt as if he could never go up the Academy steps again.

Letters from Watts on the subject of our mutual loss continued coming at very short interval for many weeks. Pages and pages of his smallest writing expressed his intense admiration and reverence for Leighton and his passionate grief at his death. He wrote that it was indeed a staggering blow. A great light was extinguished, and for himself his whole life was saddened and darkened. Watts' description of Leighton's nature in these letters is fine, and most true. "A magnificent intellectual capacity, an unerring and instantaneous spring upon the point to unravel, a generosity, a sympathy, a tact (perhaps one of the most valuable qualities in our modern times), a lovable and sweet reasonableness, yet no weakness. . . . For my own part, and I tell you life can never be the same to me again, my own grief is merged in the sense I have of the appalling loss to the nation, it seems to me to be no less." Further on he writes he would well have consented to see him no more, even to be forgotten by him, or even to

be thrown off by him, if that could have ensured the fulfilment of his destiny. . . . Watts believed he was capable of influencing the destiny of the nation. . . . He reminded me how he had always looked forward to his seat in the House of Lords. That came about, and he believed the rest would have been but a question of time. "I am glad you have enjoyed the friendship of one of the greatest men of any time." Speaking in a later letter of the kind of affection Leighton inspired, Watts compared it to that kind of friendship that takes the whole suffering humanity into a personal embrace, such was Lord Shaftesbury — such Gordon! Such was Janie Senior's, who, much as she loved her boy, would have sent him out in a life-boat *at the almost* certainty of drowning in the *absolute* certainty that the risk of sacrifice was due and a divine duty. That was a sentiment that *falling* England had need of. In a further letter: "As for myself, personally, I can say that I admired and loved him (Leighton) as much as one man can another. He may have given little in return, but that would make no difference. It is more blessed to give than receive! I hope you are at work—nothing is so good for us mentally, morally, and physically as work."

"A lovable and sweet reasonableness, yet no weakness," describes in perfect words what made Leighton so invaluable an influence over Watts. The balance in Leighton's mind and nature generally made his friendship a source of strength to Watts, though perhaps influencing more his imagination than his actions, more his whole condition than any definite action. He consulted Leighton before taking the three most important steps in his personal life, but he did not with regard to any of these cases follow Leighton's advice. Indeed Watts asked advice in all cases, I think, more to sound the opinions of others on his proposed action than

to invite guidance. It was generally a necessity in his nature which he was not prone to discuss but very rarely that instigated his intentions. Still there was a strength in the atmosphere which radiated from Leighton, though he was so gentle and merry a companion, on which Watts relied much in his daily life. Leighton had the boldness of absolute purity and intense sincerity in all his dealings with the world. There were no creases, no secret hidden caves in his nature as regarded his action with others, though he was reserved with the outside world as to his own personal kingdom. He worshipped with absolute devotion at the shrine of beauty, and though he did not aim, like Watts, at illustrating the poetry of ideas in his art, but rather the poetry of the actual visible world, his worship of nature was no less reverent and elevated, and both these great artists found the deepest ground of sympathy in their mutual passion for beauty.

Leighton was the only friend among great men with whom Watts was really intimate in his daily life. When Tennyson died, he wrote to me how greatly he felt his loss: "Tennyson's death affects me much. I only saw him at long intervals, but he was always there for the world and for me. I have been asked to be one of the pall-bearers, which I feel to be one of the greatest honours ever done me." Again, in another letter, he told me he was laid up with an inflamed foot, the result of a mosquito bite, and deplored that this prevented his being one of the pall-bearers at Tennyson's funeral, which he had been invited to be. He would, he says, have considered it the greatest honour in his life. When Browning died, he wrote from Surrey that the loss of Browning was a thing it was difficult to make up one's mind to, though he lived a long and full life, and that the better part of him could never die where the Anglo-Saxon language

was spoken. "What a position to occupy!" He had known him long years, but could not pretend to have been acquainted with him as I was, but his acquaintance with him would always be a source of great satisfaction. He certainly had known the two great poets of the age—poets who would have been great in any age; he knew them, he might say, well, but Tennyson most of the two. In the same letter he adds, "No doubt you have read Leighton's discourse; what a man!" The result of his labours at this time, he continues, does not encourage him very much. He thought, up to a certain point, it was good to compare ourselves with the best, but it may be done too much, not only he believed for our happiness, but also for our success—indeed, the less we thought whether our work was good or bad, the better! Perhaps the less people think about themselves, even if it be in the endeavour to improve, the better. All we have to do is to aim at the best in all things. Life is not long enough for anything else. Writing to me at Herd's Hill, April 15, 1882, with regard to Rossetti's death, he says that although he had been prepared, he was still shocked by Rossetti's death. What a light he ought to have been! Watts thought he was certainly the greatest genius he had ever known, and acquainted as he was with Tennyson and Browning, this seemed much to say; but Rossetti had a fire, a something, Watts thought, that made him quite unlike other men. He feels that Rossetti ought to have been with Dante and Milton, far out of the reach of doubts; but he rather dreads the results of the proposed exhibition of the works. It must be intensely interesting to himself and to Rossetti's friends, but he could not help dreading the ordeal. From what I gathered from the manner each discussed the other, though Burne-Jones was, as an artist, one whom Watts greatly admired, they had not otherwise come into any close

intimacy. The depth of sincerity and loyalty in Leighton's nature, united with the most generous and kindly impulses, not only inspired Watts with a reverent admiration, but also with a confidence and strength which overruled his self-depreciation and extreme timidity, and even the secret tortuous workings of his alarms. I have seldom met any one who, like Leighton, so actively inspired the feeling that every word a friend might say to him was considered absolutely sacred. He possessed a natural *distinction* which made it an impossibility for him to speak otherwise than he would speak in the presence of a friend. Watts, therefore, felt him to be an absolutely safe repository for his "secrets." Leighton had a rare and enviable power of inspiring his friends with a feeling of greater self-respect after they had been in his company. To offer friends the smallest grain of flattery he would have considered as great an insult to them as he would have felt it to be had it been offered to himself. Moreover, Watts knew well that when Leighton appreciated his work, that his praise was worth having! The power to criticise was as certain as was the sincerity of its utterance. Every picture Leighton painted was a subject of the greatest interest to Watts. It was Watts' discussions on Leighton's genius, and his anxiety to prove to me the great value in his art, which first made me understand it from the highest point of view. I had been so much influenced by the pre-Raphaelites' work that it took me some time really to understand Leighton. In the letter before referred to, written in 1882, when Watts was laid up at Brighton, and he says, "You may imagine what it was to me to lose Leighton's music!" he continued, "Write and tell me what you think of his 'Phryne,' I am most anxious to know." All through his correspondence with me I find most admiring allusions to Leighton's work. When referring to it he would say, that

Leighton's paintings and statues were "*achievements*," his own were only "suggestions." Above all he admired Leighton's drawings and sketches in chalk and pencil, and the sketches modelled in clay. Watts maintained that these were as fine or finer than anything of the kind that had ever been done in the past or in the present.[1] All Leighton's work contains certain qualities which Watts had possessed for a time when he worked more from nature than he did later; but though it was for other qualities Watts was seeking when he was creating his "Anthems,"—works for which he found it impossible to use models—he sorely deplored the loss of the power of completer finish which he possessed when he painted "Choosing," or indeed the much earlier picture of "The Wounded Heron." After he had recovered this early picture, having for many years almost forgotten its existence, he wrote, "When you have a moment, pop into the gallery, where you will see something which puts me to the greatest confusion!" He felt that having achieved such work as that shown in the painting of the "Heron," he ought to have done so much more in his long life. He regretted with remorse that he had not secured a power of painting with the same definite precision which his early works certainly had, so that he might have been enabled to record his ideas more distinctly when working on his "Anthems." These, he would often repeat, were but suggestions, not achievements. Those who, like myself, were in sympathy with his art, saw what he had intended in it, but,—"put them into the future—a hundred years hence—they will be mere curiosities except to a few who will care to take the trouble to search out their meaning, for they are only indications of a

[1] The large collection of Leighton's drawings and sketches preserved for the public in his own house amply confirms Watts' estimate of their unrivalled value.

direction of thought, not complete as pictorial utterances." In 1902, when speaking to me in terms of unbounded admiration of Miss Fortescue Brickdale's work, he said to me, "I feel inclined to throw away my palette and brushes. What are my things by the side of such stuff as hers." He said he felt almost knocked over by them, the vividness of conception having been carried out so forcibly and so adequately by complete execution.

Beyond the undoubted fact that both Watts and Leighton were poet-artists, it would, I think, be difficult to find two natures more different. Leighton drank the elixir of his joy in beauty straight from a source outside his own nature, whereas Watts' own nature had to vibrate with a sensibility caused by personal emotion before his imagination became inspired ;—in other words, Nature had to find her way into his brain through the medium of his own interests, sympathies, and affections before she could influence his creations in art. His humanitarian philanthropy, every impression in his personal life, everything that aroused his real interest, or even that he thought ought to arouse his interest,—all were forced into the service of his art. He was so great an artist, so clever and ingenious a craftsman, his mind was so powerfully concentrated in his work, that the construction of ideas in paint—provided always that sufficient excitement gave the necessary impetus—emerged in creations only rivalled in imaginative power by those of the artist whose work stamped itself most forcibly on his imagination when he was young, namely, "Orgagna."[1] Watts' ideas were inspired by the genius and temper of his own generation, by the

[1] Watts, when referring to the works by Orgagna in the Campo Santo at Pisa, spoke of these in terms of unbounded admiration. He placed Orgagna's work higher than any other imaginative work he knew. He would say he felt he could judge what was *best* in art. He knew how to place the giants, but of any other work he was no critic. Every one seemed to be cleverer than he was himself!

personal influence of those under whose sway his genius was for the time affected. Leighton, though as a man English to the backbone, as an artist saw nothing but what could exist at any epoch in the civilisations of all times. In his search and passion for beauty he could not localise. The past and present, he felt, should unite in art. He would say, "There should be no such thing as nationality among artists. The true brotherhood and sisterhood ignore all differences of period, clan, or race."[1]

Leighton's mind knew, and could define accurately the limits of its powers; he knew exactly what he knew, and leant on no other judgment but his own, though acknowledged by all who were really intimate with him to have been the most truly modest of men. Watts never felt sure of his ground, hence was very curious to learn the opinion others had of his work, the ground which was most assuredly his own being the outcome of an imagination, the expression of which in art required often a translation. Before even the technical qualities in Watts' art were adequately valued and understood as those which best carried out his ideas, the conceptions of his imagination had to be grasped. One cannot help those tiresome words *objective* and *subjective* coming to mind when thinking of Leighton and Watts, the one was so obviously

[1] Du Maurier tried his best to find out that Leighton had some involved racial heredity—that he was not *tout bonnement* English, but he failed. Leighton had very little time and no inclination to examine his pedigree, but his friends, Sir Baldwin and Lady Leighton, were bent on establishing the fact that he had the same ancestors as they had. I was staying with friends in the autumn of 1895, in the Isle of Mull, when the late Mrs. Sutherland Orr, Leighton's sister, joined me. While there together, a letter arrived from Lady Leighton (now Lady Leighton-Warren) in which she unravelled the ancestry of the family. As I remember the facts related in this letter, Sir Baldwin Leighton and Lord Leighton had the same ancestor in the thirteeth or fourteenth century, a Leighton of Luton. He had two sons; one remained at Luton, and was the direct ancestor of Sir Baldwin; the other went to Salisbury, and was the direct ancestor of Lord Leighton.

inspired from without, the other from within. Whatever Leighton was, he was no Celt; whatever else Watts might be, he was a Celt.

When Watts lost Leighton, he felt he had lost a bulwark of strength—a feeling shared by many other of Leighton's friends. A shadow that, alas! had come to stay, seemed to have fallen on all the artistic life of Kensington. Its world seemed to have become such a dowdy uninspired world since the bright centre light was extinguished.

Watts took a keen interest in the preservation of Leighton's house for the public. In June 1898 he wrote: "I return Mrs. Orr's letter, and with admiration for the generosity of the sisters. I rejoice as much as any can in efforts to perpetuate the memory of the great nature." He went on to say that he was sending all he had of Leighton's, and should have sent them long ago, but had always heard from Mr. C——, "again even quite lately," that nothing definite was settled. He had, however, now shown his sympathy and wish by giving the picture he valued almost more than anything he possessed. In writing of the "Clytemnestra,"[1] which was being bought for Leighton House, Watts said that it would indeed be a right thing to acquire such a picture, and that it seemed to be a great opportunity. Again, he wrote later that he was more pleased than he could say that the picture was possible. It was very fine—a great pictorial realisation of Greek sculpture and Greek poetry; very noble in expression, and singularly fine in the arrangement of drapery. Certainly a better example of Leighton at his happiest could not, he thought, be found. It is also *especially* Leighton. Later, in giving me the small sketch of "The Athlete struggling with the Python" for Leighton House, he told me that he considered he was giving the most beautiful thing he

[1] Now forming part of the Leighton House collection.

possessed. He deplored greatly the loss of the plaster cast of the sketch for the group of sleeping women in the "Cymon and Iphigenia" which Leighton had given him. A sculptor had borrowed it in order that it should be cast in bronze; but something went wrong, and it was destroyed in the process. I have never heard Watts speak with greater enthusiasm of any work of art than he did of this sketch by Leighton. He said that "it was as good as anything that has ever been done, not forgetting Pheidias! Pheidias never did anything better!"

In the summer of 1902 Watts lent some pictures to be exhibited in Leighton House, and later the Watts Exhibition was arranged there in the two studios. The pictures were selected so as to show the history of his work as regarded the different manners of painting he adopted during his long life. No. 1 was the portrait of Miss M. Kirkpatrick Brunton, signed and dated 1842, therefore painted before he went to Italy, but there were six small pictures in his still earlier manner, recalling the English school of the thirties. A large canvass on which is painted in thin colour a group of girls reclining under trees, recalled the manner of Watts' work when he was in Italy. The full-length portrait of Mrs. Nassau Senior, the very gorgeously coloured three-quarter length of Lady Somers, were the examples chosen of this method of thin glazing, but carried out with far more delicacy in the modelling and strength of brush work. The portrait of Dr. Joachim showed this method in another kind of treatment, and likewise the danger of it. The dark background is covered with small cracks in the surface of the paint. It was this danger which led Watts to discard this method entirely, and use only solid paint. While feeling out for one which would express more subtle gradations of tone, several pictures were painted in subdued tints, chiefly brown and grey, brightened by silvery lights; but though the scale of colour

a comparison between the style of Praxiteles as we now know it from the statue of Hermes undoubtedly by him lately found a Olympia would be interesting & valuable, Had the Hermes been brought to England by Lord Elgin instead of the Parthenon fragments the Critics with Payne Knight would have accepted it as a work of transcendent merit, They would have been delighted with the beauty of the workmanship & have found all they had been accustomed to carried further than they had seen before, but it is notwithstanding its really supreme beauty & excellence far below the unapproachable height of Phidias, & Phidias & Shakespeare not merely length of limb, but length of line,

alone were given that instinct of the monumental which enabled them to select what was most distinctive of the type without losing individuality, The Greek having this advantage over our countryman, that if he never glowed with the white-heat of passion & emotion, he never sank below his own mighty level,

What is experimental is progressive, pure imagination, is not a matter of experiment, though the means by which it is unveiled are up to a certain point, we can not have a Homer till the language has taken a very perfect form, or a Phidias until art has ~~been~~ reached technically power of expression, at the moment the fresh imagination comes into possession of this power is that of the greatest results.

Subsequent exertions being crippled by their very perfection

is low, they are nevertheless the works of a great colourist, and recall some of the paintings by Tintoretto in Venice, which might be almost mistaken for monochromes by those who have not a keen sense of colour. The "Judgment of Paris" is perhaps the most notable example of this phase of Watts' art. His feeling for "style" and beauty of form and modelling in the human figure is shown to perfection in this picture. The "Endymion," "The Wife of Pygmalion," the small canvass of "The Vision of Britomart," "A Prodigal," "Paolo and Francesca," "Orpheus and Euridice," are all examples of the scale being restricted to subdued tints. The love of colour, however, in its fullest chords and most brilliant hues soon reasserted itself. I saw it gradually blending with the more intricate and subtle effects of tone in the years when we first knew him. I remember discussing one of my favourite pictures in the National Gallery, Turner's "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus," with Watts. He visited the Turner room frequently about that time to drink in the colour from the later work, and it made the subject of many of our talks. The small canvass of "The Court of Death" was the finest example of this uniting of colour, tone, and atmosphere exhibited among the thirty pictures at Leighton House. The splendid piece of direct painting in the portrait of Lady Dudley, also exhibited, was one of the pictures Watts referred to when he wrote from Brighton: "I am trying here to do absolutely simple work, setting aside grounds and methods and every consideration but simple aim. I feel a certain sense of emancipation, but the things are trifles." Trifles! Never did Watts, I think, paint anything to equal this portrait in certain qualities. The complexion has the rich full colour and texture of fruit, the vigour in the workmanship shows what Watts could do when he was working against time. He ended the letter referring to it by saying he must finish

"these things, as this is the last of Brighton for me." As with the portrait of Walter Crane, he had no time to weaken it; the frank pose, the strength and simplicity in the treatment of the black dress against the fine gold background, are signs of qualities which Watts' work did but at times evince.

"Uldra" was the picture exhibited which gave one quality of his work in its most obvious form. Having, as a rule, painted in a low key, however brilliant the colour, Watts in "Love and Life," "Uldra," and several landscape pictures, pitched the scheme of tone light and fair. In "Uldra" there is no tint deeper than is found in a nautilus shell. Examples of the last phase of Watts' technique were to be seen in "Love steering the Barque of Humanity," and in "Peace and Goodwill," where the dry pigment was put on with loose, large free touches. The vigour with which Watts carried out the lines of the composition in the first of these pictures is extraordinary, considering his age at the time it was painted. Gusts of wind seem verily to be tearing along, swirling the clouds and sweeping down on the waves, flattening their furrows, and stretching the sail till it bounds from its fastening and the two ropes that held it appear to be actually flung before your eyes into the air. Again, in "Progress," a picture which Watts discussed very eagerly with me, showing much excited interest in the subject, the extraordinary sense of plunging forward through the ages realised in the action of the horse, suggests a power arising more, I think, from vitality in the psychic than in the physical condition of the worker. For certainly, if Watts' own description in his letters of his bodily state at the time these pictures were painted was correct, it was anything but vigorous. He feels "time's heavy hand" upon him. He writes from Scotland in the autumn of 1899, where he at last sees that beauty in the scenery which Leighton so keenly enjoyed almost every

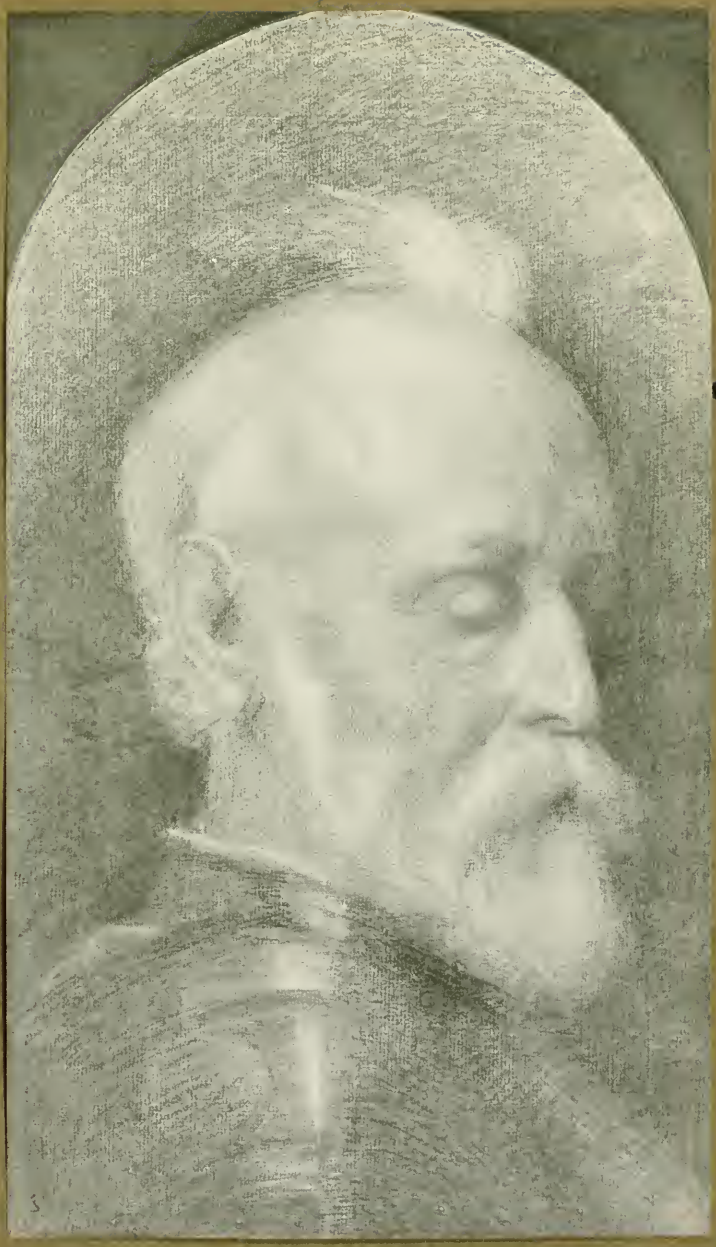
autumn, that he is trying to see what absolute change might do for him. There Watts did some beautiful work, but he was taken seriously ill, and felt ever less able to do more than "try to improve." "Most things are an affliction to me, except dabbling with a little line and colour," he wrote later. Sitting with him in his studio one morning in the summer of 1902, I realised for the first time that in some ways he had entered a sort of second childhood; a beautiful, gentle, touching childhood of old age. He spoke confidingly to me of his health, in a manner in which men speak to their sisters or to their nurse. His nature seemed to have completely reverted to a childlike simplicity and innocent frankness, always the side which inspired most affection, but which, in the intricacies of his difficult career, got at times sadly effaced and blurred. In the last autumn of his life, I went to Greece. "Delightful!" he wrote, when he heard the journey was arranged, and asked me to go in to see him and talk about it. It was on the Acropolis at Athens, in the fair light of the air and sky of Greece, compared to which all other atmospheres are but colour or half shadow, that I felt in its fullest meaning the beauty of that bloom which idealises the marbles of the foreground, the landscapes in the distance, and spreads over and floats in sky and land everywhere, and which Watts has realised in his painting—that bloom which etherealises "Hope," "Ariadne," "The Carrara Mountains," and so many of his pictures, most notably that exquisite whiff of beauty "The Island of Cos," that quality which in nature can make the most prosaic spot ideal, the most arid space suggestive of tenderest beauty.

When I returned from Greece he was eager to hear all I had to say, but when I wanted him to go into ecstasies with me over the transcendent beauty of the lines and the colour and the atmosphere, he only said, "I suppose it is wonderful,

but I was not well when I was there." His letters, written at the time he was at Athens, however, expressed his appreciation of the beauty of Greece. He wrote from Surrey later, very anxious about many things, troubled about expenses, and saying he must sell his London house but that he expected to be much more there during the coming year, as it would be the last! The subject of Leighton House is often referred to in his letters about that time. On October 21, 1903, he wrote, giving more or less a history of his struggles. He had never, since his earliest youth, sixteen or earlier! had a penny he had not earned, and then it had not been all for himself, and certainly few have given more, not out of the superfluity or abundance, but out of hard earnings, than he had. He enumerated his generous gifts, which, though in no sense regretting, made no preparation for future pecuniary ease. He especially mentioned his gift to the Postman's Park. He had endeavoured to raise the enthusiasm of the public in a good cause, but it had only ended in his having to contribute six or seven hundred pounds himself. At the close of this letter he wrote that these were bad times for artists, and, he feared, for most other things. He hoped all things were well with me. He delights in thinking that I was influencing the young girls of the day. No subject can compete in importance with the education problem. The last New Year's letter I received from him was written on January 7, 1904, and began, "It is rather late to send good wishes for the year." In it he gave but a poor account of his state. A letter written in the spring of that year ends with the words, "I am full of maladies, but I am able to work, and as eager to improve as ever, and that's about all." In another, he says, "I think aspiration will last as long as there is consciousness."

G. F. WATTS

From Drawing by Cecil Schott



CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST

WATTS had a presentiment that he would die in the year 1904. On May 16th I saw him in the crowded Queen's Hall when Joachim was receiving the ovation of thousands on the occasion of his jubilee. As I spoke to Watts the feeling came to me that the end was near. It was not that he looked more ill —indeed I have seen him at times look more weary and more exhausted; but there was on that evening the peculiar look of failing life in the face which is unmistakable. Among the stalwart musicians and the vigorous physiques of the important personages gathered together, he looked so very small —so pathetically fragile. He seemed to be conscious of some incongruity, for he began saying to me apologetically, "No personal motive would have brought me here—" I lost the rest, as I had to move on to introduce a friend to Joachim.

I am glad that that was not the last time I saw Watts. This was some ten days later, when he was working in his garden on the figure of his equestrian statue, "Vital Energy." When he saw the bronze cast placed in the quadrangle of Burlington House, he had discovered many things in it he thought he might improve, so he began working again on the original tow and plaster statue from which the cast was taken. Very old he looked, but the light in the eye was kindled afresh with the fire of aspiration as he laboured on. Yes—he was right when he wrote but a few weeks before, "I think aspiration will remain as long as there is consciousness."

Ever struggling to improve—the hope, the effort seemed to impart new life. Working away in the peasant's smock, he was eager as ever to reach a something which he aspired to as the best, but which seemed to elude him as the mountain summit eludes the traveller—that farthest summit which rises ever beyond the height attained!

> "My hill was farther; so I flung away
> Yet heard a cry,
> Just as I went, 'None goes that way
> And lives!' 'If that be all,' said I,
> 'After so foul a journey death is fair!'"

There on the same lawn where nearly thirty years ago we had stood together before the design in embryo, which now, when eighty-seven years old, he was trying to *improve* —on that evening when he had so eagerly exclaimed, "I am nothing—oh! you will find out I am nothing. One thing alone I possess, and I never remember the time I was without it—an aim towards the highest, the best, and a burning desire to reach it!" There on the same spot I saw him for the last time.

. . . . . .

Far away from the roar and stir of London's July, in those high Alps, in the lifted world of mountains, among lonely summits that look fearlessly upwards into cloudless open skies, into limitless spaces of æther, I knew, before I heard, that the spirit had at last escaped from the worn-out tenement, the golden thread had burst through from "the rough earthly web"—

> "In soul he mounts and flies,
> In flesh he dies."

Evening fell; star after star, clear and bright, rose from behind each snowy peak lifted up and away so far above the

"pomp and circumstance" of human life—mock grandeur, indeed, by the side of the invincible power and the serene quiet of those mountain forces. A great anthem seemed to ring in the night air—"Sic transit." As the world slid away into shadow and the stars were lighted all over the sky, it was as if gateways were flung open into realms more real, more truly ours than those of earth.

Fortunate it is that while consciousness is alive nothing can rob us of our delightful memories—the real facts of our lives belong to us till the end. As we look back on our short span, very distinctly among the most real facts—perhaps, indeed, the only facts worthy to be called real—are the deep impressions certain of our fellow-creatures made on us, and the impressions we made on them—in other words, the friendships of our lives. The memory of such influences may lie dormant for a time under the pressure of urgent daily interests, but they will to a certainty reassert their existence sooner or later, and most powerfully,—reminding us most convincingly of the tenacious hold they have secured on our permanent selves—when startled into prominence by the mystery of death.

During those first days, while wandering among the mountains or looking out into the star-lit skies, the sense of companionship with the artist friend as he was in the midday of his life came back so vividly it seemed like the presence of his actual self, unseen, but there; the Watts as he was in his fullest strength, when passionate zeal to achieve great things had reached its zenith; when the subtle genius, the ambitious aspirations, the lofty imagination, had found their completest expression; Watts, the earnest, reverent student, ever striving to improve, ever searching to reach light; Watts, the sensitive, confiding, inspiring friend. Yes —on the lonely slopes, a sense of the presence of the old

companion came back with a feeling of vivid reality as something, it would seem, belonging to those heights—those mountain heights, where the heavens drape the loftiest spires with shrouds of dazzling white, and where, freed from the veil of all earthly mists, fields of fair forget-me-nots, blue as the torquoise, fold round the skirts of the eternal snow.

THE END

Printed by BALLANTYNE HANSON & Co.
Edinburgh & London

"ASPIRATION"

From Drawing in Chalks by G. F. Watts

GEORGE ALLEN
PUBLISHER FOR LONDON
156 CHARING CROSS ROAD
RUSKIN HOUSE

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